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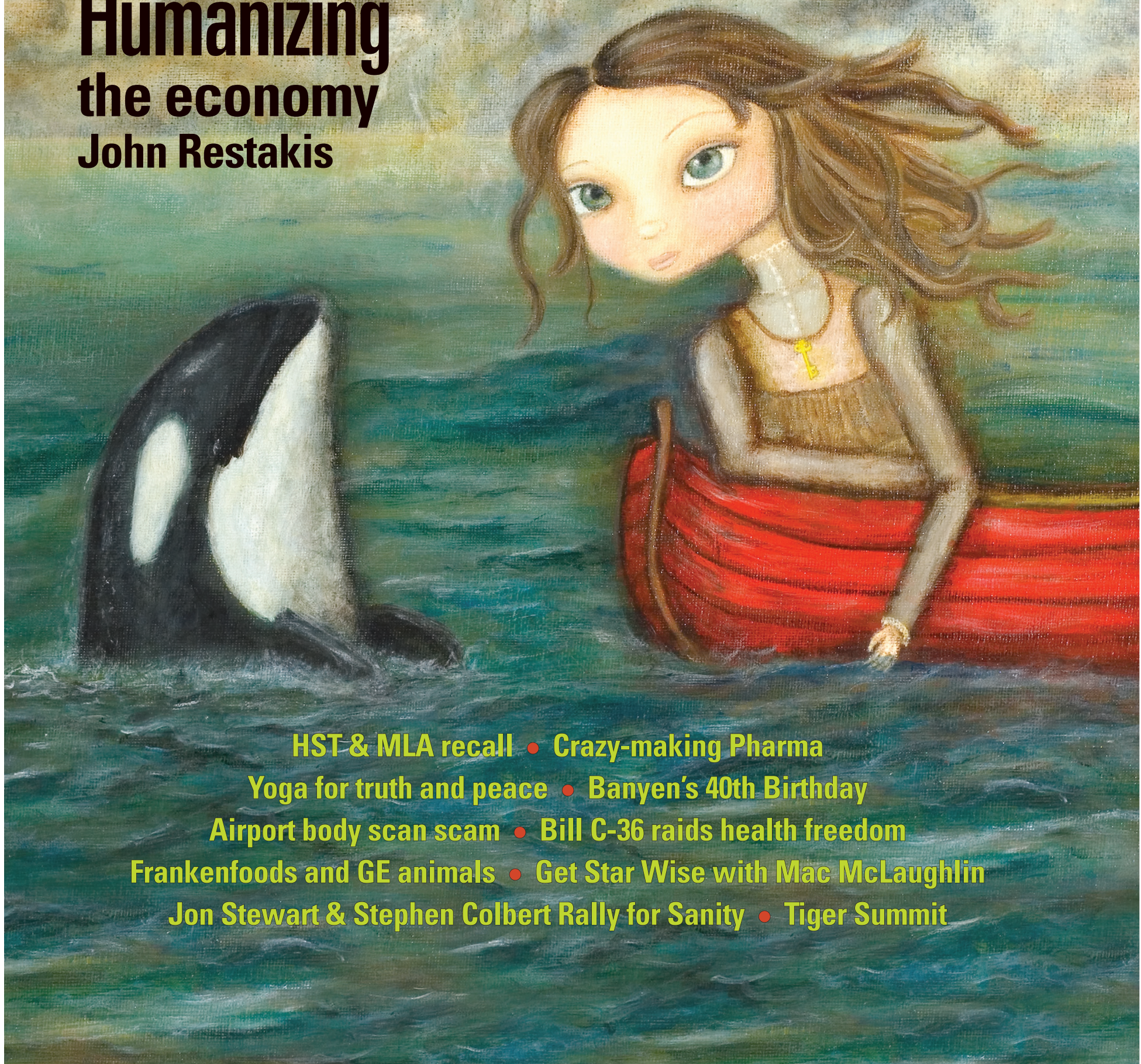
# Common Ground

DECEMBER 2010 • ISSUE 233 • EST. 1982

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## Humanizing the economy John Restakis



HST & MLA recall • Crazy-making Pharma

Yoga for truth and peace • Banyen's 40th Birthday

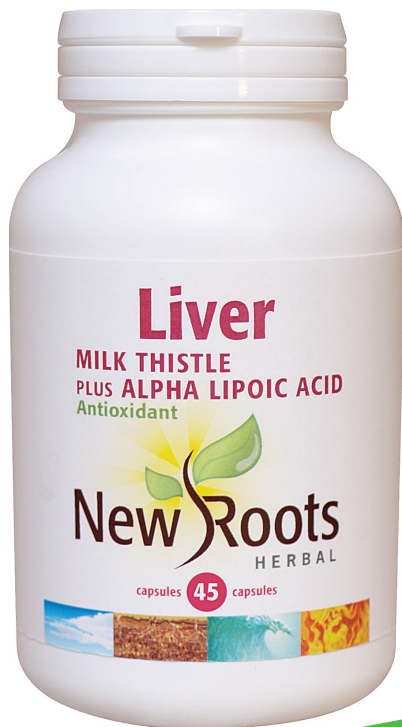
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**Publisher & Senior Editor** - Joseph Roberts  
**Managing Editor** - Sonya Weir  
**Advertising Sales** - Joanne Fleming, Adam Sealey  
**Design & Production** - www.perubluesky.ca  
**Proofing** - Anthony Prosk

#### Contributors:

Robert Alstead, Steve Anderson, Jennifer Andison, Alan Cassels, Carolyn Herriot, Daniel Keeran, Jacqueline Marcuse, Keith Martin, Mac McLaughlin, Vesanto Melina, Faisal Moola, Farah Moolji, Nazarali, Geoff Olson, Gwen Randall-Young, John Restakis, Joseph Roberts, Lucy Sharratt, David Suzuki, Eckhart Tolle

**Sales** - Head office 604-733-2215  
 toll-free 1-800-365-8897

#### Contact Common Ground:

Phone: 604-733-2215  
 Fax: 604-733-4415  
 Advertising: joanne@commonground.ca  
 adam@commonground.ca  
 Editorial: editor@commonground.ca

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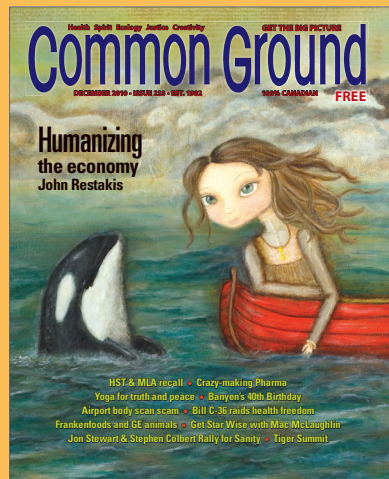
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#### Sarah and the Orca

Original artwork by Kris G. Brownlee  
 www.acageybee.com



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## Give me some truth, not semantics

**WRITING ON THE WALL** by Joseph Roberts

**T**HE WORD publish means "to make publicly known," from the Latin *publicare*.

I have been watching events unfold in the world, with the intention of understanding the big picture. I struggle to grasp these events in order to be better informed. This edition of *Common Ground* is dedicated to understanding these issues so we can be free, rather than enslaved by believing in illusions. Here again, "The unexamined life is not worth living" or, at least, life loses its worth, like our public assets. Here are some observations:

Gordon Campbell's newly appointed Chief Electoral Officer Craig James (no relation to Carole James, just the same initials and surname... a touch of NLP maybe?) stonewalled the start of the HST-related MLA recall of Ida Chong in the Oak Bay-Gordon Head riding. Craig James has rejected the Recall Petition, claiming it exceeds the 200-word maximum because, in his opinion, HST is three words and MLA is five, etc. Go figure why James is requesting that the Recall Petition and its accompanying 150 canvassers' registration forms be redone. Bureaucracy to slow down democracy?

Nationally, Stephen Harper, with marching orders supporting the Washington Consensus, thinks our troops ought to stay in 'Pipelinastan' longer than the promised withdrawal of 2011. But, wait a minute; it's all OK because Harper says our troops will be there only as teachers, trainers and friendly coaches, not warriors and killers. This twisting of language keeps our military in danger, against the majority wishes of Canadian

citizens who want them home.

What the heck is going on when another \$600 billion dollars gets dumped as Quantitative Easing into Wall Street the day after the US Midterm Elections? Why are China and Russia implementing the use of their own currencies for bilateral trade rather than being forced by the US-controlled IMF and World Bank to use American dollars? The war games off the coast of Korea feel eerily like the Gulf of Tonkin false flag incident, the war games that provoked the Vietnam War. A reader wrote, "This Russia/China trade thing is huge eh? What all the mainstream articles are leaving out is that this deal signals the world's largest energy producer and the world's largest rare earth producer taking both commodities off US dollar trading. It's much worse than what Saddam did to them when he took Iraqi oil off the dollar and started trading it in Euros. Obama asked for it though when he went and printed all that money three weeks ago."

Airport full body scanners, economic meltdowns, oil companies running parliament, pipeline proposals to connect Tar Sands with supertankers on our west coast, homelessness, our children destined to become the first generation both less educated and poorer than their parents' generation, climate change and central bankers. All of these affect our economy and our healthcare. We need help figuring it all out; we don't need privateers concealing their selfish agendas. We want honest, fair government, not a scheming pack of greedy, dishonest liars. I think the majority of Canadians would agree. Lets vote on it, eh?



# Banyen Books' 40th

## Join the celebration

ON THURSDAY December 9, Banyen Books hosts a 40th birthday celebration at the Ridge Theatre. Features include a special live "skype-in" with Ram Dass from Maui, a new short film of Ram Dass, a rare screening of *Saint Misbehavin': The Wavy Gravy Movie* and a book signing (and talk) of Ram Dass' new book *Be Love Now* by co-author Rameshwar Das. With typical compassion, owner Kolin Lymworth is turning the celebration into a fundraiser for Seva Canada's sight restoration and blindness prevention programs in the developing world.

Banyen Books has been a West Coast institution since 1970. The store continues to offer Canada's largest selection of writings and recordings on world spirituality, healing modalities, ecology, community and much more.

"*Be Love Now / Saint Misbehavin'* will be a one-of-a-kind evening, celebrating past and present spiritual activist heroes who show us how we can enjoy life while making a difference with our actions. Both Wavy and Ram Dass are deeply seasoned, huge-hearted "teachers" helping us to open our own hearts more fully," Lymworth says.

The evening is a unique opportunity to connect with Ram Dass, author of the seminal book *Be Here Now*. The author, who lives in Hawaii, was debilitated by a stroke in 1997. *Saint Misbehavin'* is a new, award-winning, full-length documentary film about Wavy Gravy (born Hugh Romney), a lifelong activist described as "the illegitimate son of Harpo Marx and Mother Teresa, conceived one starry night on a spiritual whoopee cushion."

Christened Wavy Gravy by blues legend B.B. King, Wavy's adventures have included travelling with Ken Kesey's Merry Pranksters. He was truly immortalized when he took to the stage at Woodstock, offering 400,000 people "breakfast in bed."

Seva was founded over 30 years ago by a group of eminent doctors and visionaries, among them Ram Dass, Wavy Gravy and Dr Larry Brilliant.

**Banyen's 40th anniversary party**  
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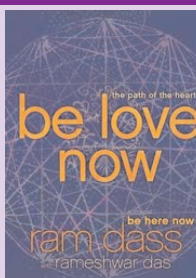
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**Ridge Theatre, 16th & Arbutus**

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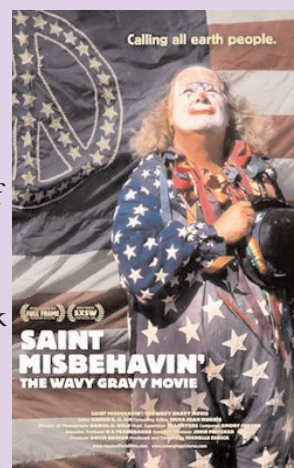


### FIRST SET

- Rameshwar Das, co-author with Ram Dass of *Be Love Now* will share stories from the new book
- Ram Dass will "skype-in" live from Maui
- plus a new short film on Ram Dass's evolution
- Q&A, tuning-in, book buying...



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### SECOND SET

**Saint Misbehavin' ...The Wavy Gravy Movie**

A full-length doc on "Nobody's Fool," the inimitable activist/clown/saint who helped found Seva and so much more. This heartfelt biopic will inspire you to, as Wavy says, "Put your good where it will do the most."



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## Selling bipolar disorder

**Crazy-making Pharma  
expands definitions**

**DRUG BUST** Alan Cassels

**H**AS THERE ever been a period when you flew off the handle over little things? Needed less sleep? Felt irritable? Answered yes to any of these? Now ask yourself this: “Is it really depression or could it be bipolar disorder?” These questions are designed to suck you into the world represented by a four-page ad promoting AstraZeneca’s drug Seroquel, the top-selling antipsychotic in the world. And what a crazy world it is.

A recent report on US prescribing trends showed that the new generation of “atypical” antipsychotic drugs, including Abilify (aripiprazole), Zyprexa (olanzapine), Seroquel (quetiapine) and Risperidal (risperidone), is now the biggest money making class of pharmaceuticals in the world. Americans alone spend upwards of \$14.6 billion per year on these drugs – an amount that beats out the Godzilla cholesterol-lowering market – a fact as deeply puzzling as it is disturbing. I mean, have we all gone completely and utterly bonkers? Yes, chalk me up as being irritable.

I remember watching the trends in antipsychotic prescriptions starting to rise a few years ago and wondered what was fuelling it. I found that schizophrenia affects only maybe 1.5 percent of the population. How then did these drugs, originally made for schizophrenia, ever become the most lucrative therapeutic class of drugs in the world? The easy answer in three words is: “Bipolar spectrum disorder.”

Classic bipolar disorder, sometimes called manic depression, is really a very serious, lifelong mental illness. It involves dramatic swings in mood that often last for days and weeks, oscillating between mania and depression. Yet its new variant, known as Bipolar II, has snuck up on us and surpassed classic bipolar, with the definitions having been widened to include people having at least one hypomanic and one major depressive episode. The depressive episodes are more frequent and intense than the manic ones so it’s often labelled ‘bipolar depression’ and part of the ‘spectrum.’

How many people suffer from some kind of bipolar disorder? Some experts say it’s around one percent of the population and others say it affects somewhere between five to 10 percent of the population. Who is right?

Well, it depends. Makers of antipsychotic drugs would certainly favour the larger number and the ‘spectrum’ where up to 10 percent of the population might become a patient. AstraZeneca hit the goldmine in October of 2008 when Seroquel became the first medication approved by the FDA to treat both “depressive and manic episodes associated with bipolar.” And there go the floodgates.

To get some clarity about what is happening, I called Dr. Joel Paris, a psychiatrist and professor at McGill University in Montreal and the author of numerous books including *Prescriptions for the Mind* and *The Use and Misuse of Psychiatric Drugs*. Dr. Paris has been openly critical of the expansion of bipolar disorder for some very good reasons, the most important one being that the proper trials of antipsychotics in “bipolar spectrum” patients have not been done.

As with any issue relating to expanding disease definitions, there is the risk that a large number of people may face the dangers of the drugs and not achieve any benefit because they don’t really have the disease the drug treats. Dr. Paris refuses to accept what has become a common perception among his colleagues that “everything is a variant on bipolar disorder, where every mood swing is being interpreted as bipolar.”

In his opinion, “If somebody is moody or irritable, it doesn’t mean because you can observe it, that there is a disease process happening. Bipolar spectrum means you don’t have mania or hypermania either. You just have mood swings. Sometimes the mood can swing by the hour. Not by the month. So classifying that as bipolar is totally unjustified.”

A lot of the overzealous use of antipsychotics comes down to how mental health is screened and labelled. According to Dr. Paris, there are many variants to human mental health, however, as he notes, “Calling everything bipolar is just plain wrong: Calling a bird and a bat the same thing is just wrong.”

Dr. Paris agreed that much of this inappropriate labelling is fuelled by the pharmaceutical industry, but that’s not the whole story. He says that pharma is just taking advantage of something that was already happening in psychiatry. “If



## HEALTH

the psychiatrists weren't already attuned to giving everyone a medication, the drug industry wouldn't be so successful," he says.

Another reason bipolar might be so widely diagnosed is because of the Mood Disorders Questionnaire (MDQ), the most widely studied screening questionnaire for bipolar disorder. You might think if you were going to give people an incredibly powerful psychiatric drug, you'd have a foolproof system to identify patients. How well does the MDQ work? One study of over 500 psychiatric outpatients found that the positive predictive value – the probability that the person has bipolar if they get a positive score on the test – was around 30 percent. Another

lose their balance or experience muscle spasms, weakness or stiffness. Restless legs and the 'jitters' are also very common. People on antipsychotics are often listless, disinterested, drooling and depressed, which often results in another prescription, this time for an antidepressant. The well-known anticholinergic effects include confusion, delirium, short-term memory problems, disorientation, sedation and impaired attention. These are only the major negative effects; there are many others.

Despite this incredible range of widely recognized adverse effects, there are still experts who welcome the expanded definitions of bipolar. One such champion is Dr. Hagop Akiskal, a highly decorated and prominent psychiatrist at the University of California, San Diego. Unlike Dr. Paris, he happens to have close ties

**A recent report on US prescribing trends showed that the new generation of "atypical" antipsychotic drugs... is now the biggest money making class of pharmaceuticals in the world. Americans alone spend upwards of \$14.6 billion per year on these drugs.**

way to say this is that the test only pinpoints who actually has the condition only about a third of the time. The test lists all kinds of bipolar symptoms, but it doesn't define them in terms of a time scale, a fact that has been crucial in having personality disorders become easily rebranded as bipolar disorder.

Let's say you have actual bipolar disorder; do the drugs like Seroquel actually work? Dr. Paris says the drugs do help some people, but that the old standby treatment is lithium, which has been in use since the 1970's.

In terms of the safety of the new generation of antipsychotic drugs, you'd have to look hard to find a class of drugs currently on the market that have more toxic and damaging effects than the antipsychotics. Again, for people who are truly psychotic, schizophrenic or bipolar, these newer generation drugs may make sense and help. But even for those people who are helped, there is an incredible cost in terms of potential for well-known adverse effects that can range from merely uncomfortable to life-threatening.

Heading that list is tardive dyskinesia, a very common, serious and sometimes irreversible adverse effect. Antipsychotic drugs cause people to make strange involuntary movements of the lips, tongue, and sometimes the fingers, toes and trunk. The person can become immobile and have difficulty chewing or swallowing. The drugs can cause diabetes and Parkinsonism where people have difficulty speaking or swallowing,

to pharmaceutical companies such as Abbott, AstraZeneca, Bristol-Myers Squibb, Eli Lilly, and GlaxoSmithKline and would be considered a 'Key Opinion Leader,' the kind of doctor the companies love to have on the payroll.

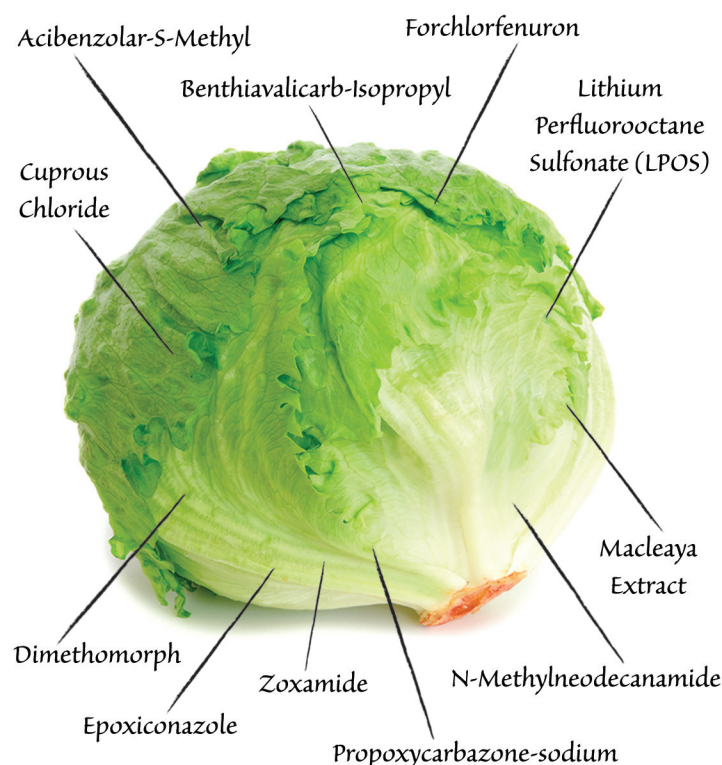
While this influential psychiatrist might be pushing the boundaries of 'bipolar spectrum,' thinking it will ultimately benefit patients, this is a highly contested area of psychiatry. Many critics like Dr. Paris say that when the boundaries are too wide, it means many patients are either misdiagnosed or over-medicated with these powerful drugs and doctors should be cautious and conservative.

It's true that a lot of the latest antipsychotic R&D is funded by the manufacturers and much of it does little more than find niche markets for their drugs. A recent court case against Seroquel's manufacturer AstraZeneca revealed that clinical trials themselves were becoming a form of camouflaged marketing. In 1997, a researcher at the University of Liverpool asked AstraZeneca for research funds for a study he was planning. The company official apparently replied that "R&D is no longer responsible for Seroquel research – it is now the responsibility of Sales and Marketing."

Say no more.

For Dr. Joel Paris, the worst part of the story is the marketing and use of these drugs in children. He says bipolar disorder doesn't exist in kids, but psychiatrists often treat them as if it did. "A moody, impulsive child becomes a moody, impulsive *continued p.42...*

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# The Chertoff connection

## body scanners are about profits not protection

by Jacqueline Marcus

IT'S AMAZING what our government has forced us to accept in the name of "security." They've bankrupted our treasury to chase down a hundred or so Islamic extremists hiding in the mountainous caves of Afghanistan. The reasoning for this insanity: "We must get them before they get us." In the last year alone, the military tab came to \$100 billion dollars to find 50 or 100 extremists or "insurgents" who are fighting because they don't want the US oil companies to steal their oil. We don't know how many people have died from our government's illegal, preemptive invasions in the name of security, but it's estimated over a million victims – fathers, mothers and children – were killed and hundreds of thousands of victims maimed for life, including our soldiers. Meanwhile, weapon contractors profit in the billions selling weapons for an unnecessary occupation while our government officials tell us we "must sacrifice by cutting Social Security for the elderly," which is far more frightening to those dependent on that income than an extremist hiding in a cave somewhere in Afghanistan.

Now, our deeply concerned government officials are forcing every law-abiding citizen to experience the humiliating treatment of entering a prison at the airports. We are forced to stand inside a whirling radiating scanner while images of our naked bodies are examined by strangers and if we refuse, we must be subjected to offensively intrusive pat-downs exactly like criminal prisoners on the verge of entering prisons instead of commercial airliners. And if you refuse both and decide to go home, TSA guards will chase you down

and charge you an \$11,000 dollar fine. The pilots association this month instructed members to refuse body-scanner screening, out of concern that frequent exposure to the machines would subject them to health risks. Passengers are equally concerned for the same reason. Inspectors near the machines are also worried that radiation exposure is subjecting them to health risks.

These changes didn't take place because the searches prior to the body scanner machines and intrusive pat-downs weren't working; they were working extremely well. No, these changes happened because the former Head of Homeland Security, Michael Chertoff, had an ulterior motive in promoting the airport security scanning machines that people are objecting to so strongly. The company that makes the machine is now one of Chertoff's clients, but in the past, under the Bush administration, Chertoff was selling these machines to the government and to the Obama administration and they bought it hook, line and sinker... Michael Chertoff has been the leading promoter-sales pitch man for All body Scanners."

Let's get real. Our government officials could care less about our safety. If they did, they'd be doing something about the oil and gas companies' terribly dangerous process of extracting natural gas known as "fracking." Hydraulic fracturing is a means of natural gas extraction employed in deep natural gas well drilling. Once a well is drilled, millions of gallons of water are polluted, sand and proprietary chemicals are injected... in short, fracking contaminates our drinking water, rendering it toxic. In fact, it's so toxic that a single flick of

a match can create an explosion from the contaminated water. (*Gasland*: a film by Josh Fox: <http://gaslandthemovie.com/whats-fracking%22>)

If our government officials were so concerned about our safety, they'd protect the public from BP's oil spill, the exposure of methane and the tons of toxic dispersants that were dumped in the Gulf. Instead, the Obama administration tells us that it's all good, including the endless sea of dead fish that washed up on the shores. And what fish are left in the toxic Gulf, the EPA has given the approval: safe to eat!

If it can force passengers to enter body scanners that undress them and expose them to radiation, what's next? Should we expect government contracts on satellite security bracelets that mark our every move in the name of "security" too, which would enrich Chertoff and associates even more at the expense of our liberties? If they can force us to enter risky body scanners in the name of security, our Fourth Amendment is completely annihilated. Body trackers are next.

Trust me, you can be sure that Michael Chertoff will never step foot in his own company's body scanner when he flies. Nope, he's got his own private jet, free from all body searches, compliments of the American taxpayers.

*The above commentary was posted at [buzzflash.com](http://buzzflash.com). BuzzFlash provides headlines, news and commentary for a geographically-diverse, politically-savvy, pro-democracy, anti-hypocrisy web community, reaching five million people a month and growing.*

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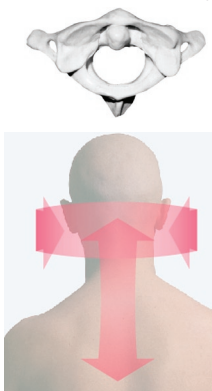
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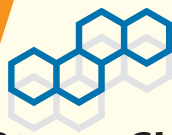


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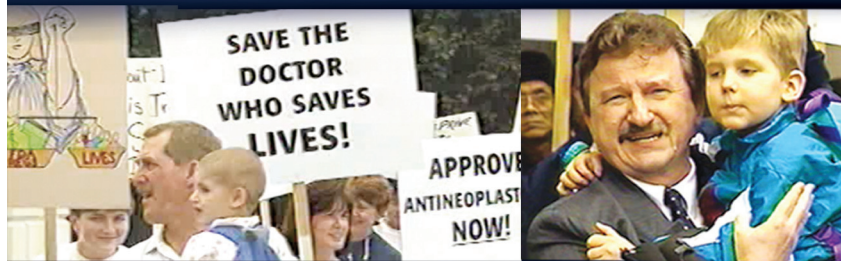
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# Bill C-36: Canadians face trespass and raids

A FEDERAL BILL purporting to make Canadians safer will actually make them less safe and, if passed, will likely face a barrage of constitutional challenges in the courts, according to a leading constitutional lawyer and a growing number of concerned citizens, health consumer groups and legislators.

Bill C-36: The Canada Consumer Product Safety Act gives Health Canada sweeping new powers, shifts control to bureaucrats and puts Canadians at risk of trespass and raids by Health Canada, without requiring government officials to go through the courts. The bill has passed 3rd reading in the House of Commons and is now before the Senate.

Shawn Buckley, a Kamloops-based constitutional lawyer and president of the Natural Health Products Protection Association (NHPPA), originally challenged earlier versions of Bill C-36 (Bills 52 & 6) that died due to widespread opposition from health consumers and vendors of natural health products and/or when earlier parliamentary sessions were dissolved or prorogued. Responding to outrage from consumers and vendors of natural health products, the government and MPs from all parties backed off, specifically exempting natural health products in the latest version: Bill C-36.

In spite of the exemption, Buckley remains concerned that Bill C-36 is still a "Trojan Horse" that will ultimately pave the way for government to re-introduce

the same sweeping provisions that bypass the rule of law to apply to Canada's natural health industry, which has been under siege since natural health products (NHP's) were included under the Food & Drug Act in 2004. As a result of Natural Health Product regulations, thousands of products have become unavailable to consumers, restricting access to health-care alternatives.

"Bill C-36 is sold to us as necessary for our safety," says Buckley, "but if I'm correct, this bill represents one of the most unsafe legal moves – certainly in my lifetime."

Senators Elaine McCoy (PC), Joseph Day (Lib), Celine Hervieux-Payette (Lib), George Furey (Lib) and Tommy Banks (Lib) – all lawyers – have expressed concern that the bill is a breach of civil liberties and will probably not stand up to what will likely be many court challenges, should it pass. Banks says, "It is undoing 400 years of common law."

Fasken Martineau, one of the country's leading law firms, has also expressed concern about the impact of Bill C-36. Peter Pliszka, a partner with Fasken Martineau's Toronto office, says, "Bill C-36 will introduce a revolutionary upheaval in product regulation in Canada," noting it goes against 140 years of Canadian history.

*The NHPPA is dedicated to protecting access to Natural Health Products and Dietary Supplements. [www.nhppa.org](http://www.nhppa.org)*

## "Freedom in Crisis" lecture tour

**Shawn Buckley**, president of the Natural Health Products Protection Association (NHPPA) is one of a few lawyers with the expertise to explain the laws that could extinguish our freedom to choose vitamin, mineral, herbal and traditional natural health products. Buckley's cross-country lecture tour "Freedom in Crisis" began on November 18 and continues to December 7. Throughout the tour, Buckley has been alerting the public about the potential threat to rights and freedoms that Bill C-36 poses, as well as informing people about the negative impact the Natural Health Product Regulations will have on NHP businesses and consumers as the regulations come into full force. Buckley has also provided a guide for NHP businesses to help vendors understand their rights and protect their businesses in the event of a Health Canada raid.

The more people the NHPPA can reach, educate, get angry and get active, the better chance it has to re-set this unfair trajectory. Health Canada's NHP Regulations have been set up to begin greater enforcement in 2011. It is not 'too late.' It is not an exercise in futility to 'challenge the government.' In the face of such powerful opposition we all have a tendency to accept the status quo. But we can change; we need not be quieted into submission. Canadians' outrage has moved the government before.

Listen to the live 30-minute taping of *Nelson Before Nine* (at [www.nhppa.org](http://www.nhppa.org)) to hear how Bill C-36: The Consumer Product Safety Act continues to threaten our constitutional rights. **Monday Dec. 6: Shawn Buckley in Vancouver** – Integrative Medical Centre, 601 W. Broadway, 7 PM. **In Edmonton:** Tuesday December 7. **In Calgary:** Wednesday December 8. See full tour schedule at [www.nhppa.org](http://www.nhppa.org)

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# Dreaming of a Vancouver Island Diet

ON THE GARDEN PATH Carolyn Herriot



**M**Y LIFE changed after my new book *The Zero Mile Diet* was released in June. I was invited to speak to many communities around Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands, which suited me perfectly because I was talking about a Vancouver Island Diet. By year's end, after all my travels and many conversations, I'd gotten a good taste of what the Vancouver Island Diet looks like. So to cheer you up for the festive season, here's a little sampler.

Arriving at the end of the lane onto Madrona Farm in September, the vision of the Blenkinsop Valley, covered by gently sloping fields of vibrant vegetables, brought tears to my eyes. It was year three of the 'Chef's Survival Challenge,' a fundraising event in aid of the farmers' survival challenge. In my mind, I saw the fertile valleys running the spine of Vancouver Island from Cowichan to Comox and beyond. My vision was of food growing in the

fields, instead of hay.

In this era of 'foodies,' a 'taste of Tuscany' from our backyard makes a great incentive for travellers to visit here. Think how much we could benefit from developing an Island 'Gastro economy,' harvesting local seafood, berries, wild mushrooms, seaweed, artisan breads, herbs, vegetables, artisan cheeses, beer, wine and chocolate. We'd be creating food security for all of us. What an opportunity.

At the Wine and Culinary Festival at O.U.R. EcoVillage in Shawnigan Lake, a representative of the Canadian Chefs Culinary Association, who had just finished travelling across Canada from coast to coast, informed us that Vancouver Island was streaks ahead of the rest of the country and if the Vancouver Island Diet was launched more substantially, Vancouver Island would be poised to benefit from an ecotourist bonanza. How inspiring.

More than 19,000 people live in Squamish and their Saturday Farmer's Market, with 50+ local vendors, was truly amazing. The perfect gathering place for the community, it showcased baked goods from artisan bakers, produce, preserves and coffee, providing anything one's heart could desire, right in the heart of downtown. How convenient.

My friend Susan told me how happy she was that she'd finally got an Oak Bay community allotment after waiting six years and that Oak Bay was going to double the current allotment size. Meanwhile, Rainey and Margot could not

wait that long and planted up the boulevard instead, using public space in an urban environment to grow food for others. This had a transformational effect on the neighbourhood, bringing people together in conversations, encouraging others to plant food in their front gardens and boulevards and enabling local children to harvest fresh food for dinner and plant seeds. Imagine the upcoming revolution in horticulture when gardeners start growing all the beautiful food plants we have forgotten about again. Back to the future.

In the Gorge area of Victoria, the 'Gorge Tillicum Urban Farmers' started out meeting in each other's homes, but soon needed a larger venue after a hundred neighbours came together to produce food and promote food security. We don't have to do it all; we can share the load of making the change with friends, family and neighbours. In a recession, there's less money and more time, but perhaps it's just what we need to rethink our ways – getting back to the land to feed ourselves and build community.

Eat well and have a delicious holiday season.

*Carolyn Herriot is the author of The Zero Mile Diet – A Year-round Guide to Growing Great Organic Food. (Harbour Publishing). [earthfuture.com/gardenpath/](http://earthfuture.com/gardenpath/)*

## Community agriculture vital for food security

Maximizing local food production will enhance food security and improve the nutritional value of food. Local food can be delivered to the tables of consumers faster than imported food, which loses a lot of its nutrients in transit. Public health will improve as a result of people eating more nutritious food and being more active as they engage in growing food. Biodiversity will increase as monoculture lawns disappear to be replaced with diverse plantings that provide habitat for wildlife. Having a 'Community Agricultural Plan' encourages development of more sustainable residential, commercial, institutional and industrial places. Additionally, there will be greater diversion of compostable waste from the landfill and an associated improvement of soils with the use of compost. Further, agriculture is an important strategy to mitigate the impacts of climate change.

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## Bridging the gap

**NUTRISPEAK** Vesanto Melina MS, RD

THE FOLLOWING scenario offers a way to bridge the gap between vegetarians and non-vegetarians. And if you or a family member follow a particular diet for health reasons or because of allergies, you can replace the word “vegetarian” with the specific term for your diet while still using similar reasoning.

You are part of a social group in which most members know each other fairly well. One evening, someone makes a friendly, light-hearted comment about your food choices. A new member suddenly becomes aware of your vegetarian diet and blurts out “You’re a vegetarian? I can’t believe it. I hope you’re not an animal rights activist too. All they are good for is putting the farmers out of work.” The group falls silent. What should you say?

In these situations, it can be tempting to ignore the person, leave the group or respond with an equally tactless remark. When we feel criticized, we easily become defensive. Yet some responses will further convince the person that you are some sort of unpleasant extremist. This person has had certain life experiences that led to their current perspective. They may be trying to compensate for guilt around the issue.

Most people are aware of the suffering of animals in factory farming systems and at the slaughterhouse, even for “free range” animals. You might offer a quick response, but it can be hard to come up with one that is free of sarcasm.

A good option is to respond with confidence, conviction and respect. You might say, “In answer to your questions, yes I am a vegetarian and I do believe in animal rights. My choice of a vegetarian diet began as a response to the heart disease in my family and my own symptoms. I believe that my diet saved my life. As I learned more, I discovered that vegetarian diets help preserve the environment and reduce animal suffering. I see my dietary choice as being similar to your...” (Here, you could mention their volunteer work with children or whatever they do that is compassionate). “I eat this way because it is something I can do to make this world a kinder, gentler place.” With these kinds of responses, you build a bridge instead of a barricade. As another bridge builder next time your group meets, you could bring a sweet treat like the Nutty Date Cookies featured here.

*Vesanto Melina is a local dietitian and author. [www.nutrispeak.com](http://www.nutrispeak.com)*



### Nutty Date Cookies

These cookies (from *Becoming Vegetarian* by Vesanto Melina and Brenda Davis) are a delicious holiday treat without added sugar, butter or eggs. The sweetener is dates. Ground flaxseed acts as a binder. Use fresh walnuts as they have no bitter aftertaste.

2 cups pitted dates, packed  
1/2 cup water  
1 tbsp. lemon juice  
1/2 cup sunflower or safflower oil  
1/4 cup soy milk  
1 tsp. vanilla  
1 tbsp. ground flaxseed  
1 cup whole wheat flour  
2 tsp. baking powder  
1/2 tsp. baking soda  
1/2 tsp. salt  
1 cup walnut halves (3.5 oz/100 g)

Preheat the oven to 325F. In a small saucepan with a lid, bring the dates and water to a boil, cover, reduce heat and simmer for about 5 minutes or until dates are soft. Remove from heat and mash. (A potato masher works well for this). In a large bowl, combine oil, vanilla, soy milk, lemon juice, ground flax and mashed dates. In a bowl or 2-cup measuring cup, mix the flour, baking powder, soda and salt well. Pour these dry ingredients into the wet ingredients and stir to mix (do not over-stir). Fold in the walnuts. Drop by tablespoonful onto an oiled cookie sheet.

Bake for about 20 to 25 minutes or until nicely browned. Remove from the oven and cool on a wire rack or on the pan. Store in an airtight container. Makes 24 cookies.

Per cookie: calories: 129; protein: 1.8 g; fat: 8 g; carbohydrate: 16 g; dietary fiber: 2 g; vitamin E: 1.2 mg; omega-3 fatty acids: 0.8 g.

**Low Fat Nutty Date Cookies**  
(4 g fat per cookie). Add 1 large grated apple or 1/2 cup applesauce, decrease oil to 1/4 cup and decrease walnuts to 1/2 cup. Add apple to the date mixture before adding flour.

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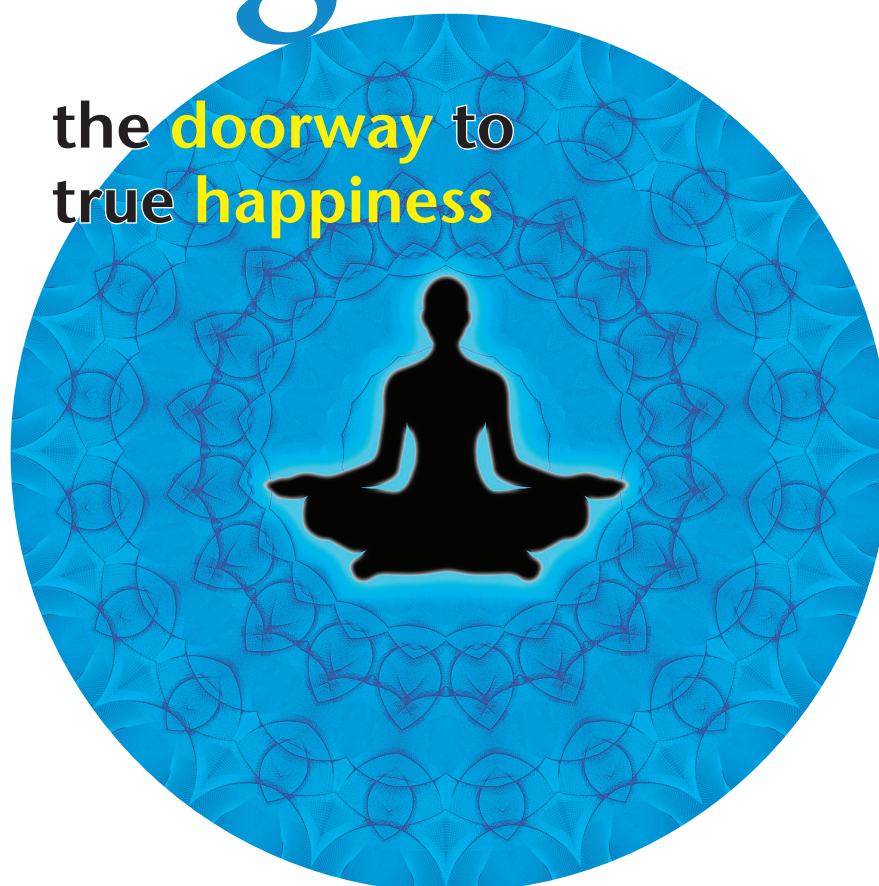
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# Yoga

by Farah Moolji Nazarali

the doorway to  
true happiness



I DIDN'T KNOW what I was searching for until I found it. And on that auspicious day, I realized I had found what I had been looking for my entire life. The details of that day are so vivid for me, deeply etched into my mind and into the memory of every cell in my body. It was the day I met my *Guru*, Paramhans Swami Maheshwarananda.

Until that day, I hadn't realized how restless I had been as a yoga teacher – always interested in the latest yoga fad,

cism while for me, meeting my *Guru* has been the greatest blessing of my life, awakening within me the attributes of *viveka* (discernment), *vayaigra* (detachment) and *bhakti* (devotion).

Guruji also helped me understand mantra and gave me guidance in using mantra-japa (repetition of sacred Sanskrit sounds) as a way to focus my mind from restlessness and as a way to find inner peace.

In the months after meeting my

**Yoga is not something I do. It is not something I teach. Yoga is who I am in all areas of my life. Yoga is the choices I make on a daily basis with my *karma indriyas* through my hands (actions and behaviours), my tongue (speech) and my thoughts.**

even though the blissful experiences of the latest yoga styles were always short lived. When I met Paramhans Swami Maheshwarananda, I realized that in front of me was not someone who practised yoga or who knew Vedanta and yoga philosophy, but a human being who embodies the consciousness that awakens when a person practises yoga. In that moment, I realized how shallow my understanding of yoga was.

For some people, the concept of guru invokes feelings of skepticism and cyni-

*Guru*, I began to understand how precious yoga is. Guruji taught me a yoga stripped of all the things we as Westerners impose on it in order to make it beautiful, trendy and hip. Yoga is, and always will be, a body of wisdom for living in this world, helping us understand our purpose in it and a way to realize and awaken our Divine nature. Yoga helps us avoid becoming entangled in materialism, consumerism and greed – the external attractions and distractions of modern everyday life – and brings us



## SPIRITUALITY

closer to love, truth and peace.

Guruji helped me understand how important diet is, encouraging me to adopt a vegetarian diet as a way to awaken compassion for all living creatures. Since becoming a vegetarian, I feel more connected to animals than ever before and I also feel that my karmic footprint is lighter. I will never forget the night I was riding my bike home and I saw a dog that had just been run over by a car. When I looked into the eyes of that dog, I witnessed his suffering and pain and his fear and loneliness in facing death. While I realize my dietary choice may not be right for everyone, I'm glad I have the opportunity every day to support the well-being of other living creatures and to help promote the health of the planet.

I now know I had been searching for a source of lasting happiness outside of myself, but that source is within me and yoga is the vehicle. All I have to do it

practise – practise *every* day. And how appropriate that the system he founded is called Yoga in Daily Life; there are so many layers of meaning in that one phrase. Yoga is not something I do. It is not something I teach. Yoga is who I am in all areas of my life. Yoga is the choices I make on a daily basis with my *karma indriyas* through my hands (actions and behaviours), my tongue (speech) and my thoughts.

Before I met Guruji, I had many fundamental questions about life, including the question, "Why am I here and what is my purpose in being here?" Through the loving guidance of my *Guru*, I realized the postures in yoga not only help the body stay healthy but, more importantly, they awaken consciousness and wisdom. As wisdom awakens, we achieve clarity about our deepest questions and our strongest desires and yearnings. Indeed, my *sadhana* (practice) has provided me with answers to

many of my questions about life.

What I love most about my *Guru* is his openness to all paths and to all the "Great Teachers." It affirms for me what I have always known to be true: that love and wisdom can never be contained in any one religion or path, but are the essence of all religions and all paths.

I hope that through my daily practice, more and more of my Divine nature can be revealed and that one day, in this lifetime or the next, I can realize the words of my *Guru*, who when asked what yoga is, held out his hands and said, "These hands. What are they for? They are for serving others."

*Farah Moolji Nazarali is a yoga teacher and a student of the Yoga in Daily Life system. Her Guru, Paramhans Swami Maheshwarananda, will be visiting Vancouver in March as part of his annual World Peace Tour. Visit [www.vanyoga.com](http://www.vanyoga.com) for details.*

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# The many faces of ego

A NEW EARTH Eckhart Tolle

AN EGO that wants something from another – and what ego doesn't – will usually play some kind of role to get its "needs" met, be they material gain, a sense of power, superiority or specialness or some kind of gratification, be it physical or psychological. Usually, people are completely unaware of the roles they play. They are those roles. Some roles are subtle; others are blatantly obvious except to the person playing it. Some roles are designed simply to get attention from others. The ego thrives on others' attention, which is, after all, a form of psychic energy. The ego doesn't know that the source of all energy is within you, so it seeks it

in yourself is this: Whenever you feel superior or inferior to anyone, that's the ego in you.

## Villain, victim, lover

Some egos, if they cannot get praise or admiration, will settle for other forms of attention and play roles to elicit them. If they cannot get positive attention, they may seek negative attention instead, for example, by provoking a negative reaction in someone else. Some children already do that too. They misbehave to get attention. The playing of negative roles becomes particularly pronounced whenever the ego is magnified by an active pain-body, that is to say, emotional pain

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**The ego thrives on others' attention, which is, after all, a form of psychic energy. The ego doesn't know that the source of all energy is within you, so it seeks it outside.**

.....

outside. It is not the formless attention, which is Presence, that the ego seeks, but attention in some form, such as recognition, praise, admiration or just to be noticed in some way, to have its existence acknowledged.

A shy person who is afraid of the attention of others is not free of ego, but has an ambivalent ego that both wants and fears attention from others. The fear is that the attention may take the form of disapproval or criticism, that is to say, something that diminishes the sense of self rather than enhances it. So the shy person's fear of attention is greater than his or her need of attention. Shyness often goes with a self-concept that is predominately negative, the belief of being inadequate. Any conceptual sense of self – seeing myself as this or that – is ego, whether predominately positive (I am the greatest) or negative (I am no good). Behind every positive self-concept is the hidden fear of not being good enough. Behind every negative self-concept is the hidden desire of being the greatest or better than others. Behind the confident ego's feeling of and continuing need for superiority is the unconscious fear of inferiority. Conversely, the shy, inadequate ego that feels inferior has a strong, hidden desire for superiority. Many people fluctuate between feelings of inferiority and superiority, depending on situations or the people they come into contact with. All you need to know and observe

from the past that wants to renew itself through experiencing more pain. Some egos perpetrate crimes in their search for fame. They seek attention through notoriety and other people's condemnation. "Please tell me that I exist, that I am not insignificant," they seem to say. Such pathological forms of ego are only more extreme versions of normal egos. A very common role is the one of victim and the form of attention it seeks is sympathy or pity or others' interest in my problems, "me and my story." Seeing oneself as a victim is an element in many egoic patterns, such as complaining, being offended, outraged and so on.

Of course, once I am identified with a story in which I assigned myself the role of victim, I don't want it to end, and so, as every therapist knows, the ego does not want an end to its "problems" because they are part of its identity. If no one will listen to my sad story, I can tell it to myself in my head, over and over and feel sorry for myself and so have an identity as someone who is being treated unfairly by life or other people, fate or God. It gives definition to my self-image, makes me into someone, and that is all that matters to the ego. In the early stages of many so-called romantic relationships, role-playing is quite common in order to attract and keep whoever is perceived by the ego as the one who is going to "make me happy, make me feel special, and fulfill all my needs." "I'll play who



## SPIRITUALITY

you want me to be, and you'll play who I want you to be." That's the unspoken and unconscious agreement. However, role-playing is hard work and so those roles cannot be sustained indefinitely, especially once you start living together. When those roles slip, what do you see? Unfortunately, in most cases, not yet the true essence of that being, but that which covers up the true essence: the raw ego divested of its roles, with its pain-body, and its thwarted wanting which now turns into anger, most likely directed at the spouse or partner for having failed to remove the underlying fear and sense of lack that is an intrinsic part of the egoic sense of self. What is commonly called "falling in love" is in most cases an intensification of egoic wanting and

such identification with the conditioned and the temporal obscured the light of the unconditioned and eternal that shines in each human being.

In our contemporary world, the social structures are less rigid, less clearly defined than they used to be. Although most people are, of course, still conditioned by their environment, they are no longer automatically assigned a function and with it an identity. In fact, in the modern world, more and more people are confused as to where they fit in, what their purpose is and even who they are.

I usually congratulate people when they tell me, "I don't know who I am anymore." Then they look perplexed and ask, "Are you saying it is a good thing to be confused?" I ask them to investigate. What does it mean to be confused? "I don't know" is not confusion. Confusion is: "I don't know, but I should know" or "I don't know, but I need to know." Is it possible to let go of the belief that you should or need to know who you are? In other words, can you cease looking to conceptual definitions to give you a sense of self? Can you cease looking to thought for an identity? When you let go of the belief that you should or need to know who you are, what happens to confusion? Suddenly, it is gone. When you fully accept that you don't know, you actually enter a state of peace and clarity that is closer to who you truly are than you thought you could ever be. Defining yourself through thought is limiting yourself.

### Pre-established roles

Of course, different people fulfill different functions in this world. It cannot be otherwise. As far as intellectual or physical abilities are concerned – knowledge, skills, talents and energy levels – human beings differ widely. What really matters is not what function you fulfill in this world, but whether you identify with your function to such an extent that it takes you over and becomes a role that you play. When you play roles, you are unconscious. When you catch yourself playing a role, that recognition creates a space between you and the role. It is the beginning of freedom from the role. When you are completely identified with a role, you confuse a pattern of behaviour with who you are and you take yourself very seriously. You also automatically assign roles to others that correspond to yours. For example, when you visit doctors who are totally identified with their role, to them you will not be a human being, but a patient or a case history. Although the social structures in the con- *continued p.31...*

needing. You become addicted to another person or rather to your image of that person. It has nothing to do with true love, which contains no wanting whatsoever. The Spanish language is the most honest in regard to conventional notions of love: *Te quiero* means "I want you" as well as "I love you." The other expression for "I love you," *te amo*, which does not have this ambiguity, is rarely used – perhaps because true love is just as rare.

### Letting go of self-definitions

As tribal cultures developed into the ancient civilizations, certain functions began to be allotted to certain people: ruler, priest or priestess, warrior, farmer, merchant, craftsman, labourer, and so on. A class system developed. Your function, which in most cases you were born into, determined your identity, determined who you were in the eyes of others as well as in your own eyes. Your function became a role, but it wasn't recognized as a role: It was who you were or thought you were. Only rare beings at the time, such as the Buddha or Jesus, saw the ultimate irrelevance of caste or social class, recognized it as identification with form and saw that



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# Christmas Wishes for the homeless

by Daniel Keeran

**INSPIRATION**

**A**CROSS EUROPE and North America, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of homeless people, especially in recent years in Vancouver and Victoria in BC. A growing body of information also indicates our current approach to homelessness has led to an inefficient use of public resources; it costs more to leave people homeless than to provide them with permanent housing and support services.

## Show you care through Homeless Partners.com

This Christmas, you can help fulfill the wishes of a homeless person. At [www.homelesspartners.com](http://www.homelesspartners.com), read the stories and modest Christmas wishes of the individuals who will be spending their Christmas holidays at a shelter. Through the website, you can choose to send a personal gift or a caring message. Only the first name and ID number of the individual is provided to protect their anonymity. You may choose to send a gift online or deliver it to the reception desk at the shelter. Shelter addresses are provided on the website.

Who are these people we pass on the street, begging for food and money, sleeping in doorways and parks and pushing grocery carts full of containers and stuff from garbage bins?

Homeless people are men and women who have lost their home and perhaps their family. Each person has a real life story with poignant reasons for their homelessness. They are brothers and sisters, sons and daughters, fathers and mothers, aunts and uncles. No one deserves to suffer as the homeless do – often beaten, robbed, diseased and dying on the street.

Sometimes, they are recently homeless. Others have lived on and off the street and in shelters for many years. It's not uncommon for someone to prefer the street to a bedbug infested single room occupancy hotel room where they are at risk of being assaulted. For many, this is worse than sleeping on the street and having the shoes stolen off their feet and all their personal possessions taken, including photos of loved ones and their personal identification, which makes it difficult or impossible to register for many services like welfare. There is an urgent need for some kind of lockers or secure place they can keep their belongings.

Many of the homeless suffer from mental illness. This can lead to drug addiction as they try to help themselves feel better. Although they may sometimes look able bodied, mental illness

able to work because they have no tools, tool belt or steel-toe work boots. These can be donated new or used as long as they are in sturdy and reusable condition.

Many homeless people are talented

**It costs more to leave people homeless than to provide them with permanent housing and support services.**

is not always outwardly apparent and it prevents people from holding down a job, as much as a physical handicap prevents a wheelchair-bound person from walking.

## What do homeless people need?

One of the most pervasive problems with the homeless is "street feet." Their shoes and socks become wet for long periods of time and they are unable to find a warm, dry place where they can stay inside long enough for them to dry out. This creates sores, pain and infection. They need waterproof footwear and warm dry socks.

Those who are capable of working, especially in the building trades are not

artists, musicians and writers. By gifting art supplies like canvasses, acrylic paints, brushes, etc, they can be afforded the tools to create works of art.

If they were your family members, regardless of their circumstances or choices, you would want them to know you care. We believe everyone is our family member and these people are in trouble.

The most important thing a homeless person needs is to know that you care: a smile as you pass by, saying hello or a small gift or caring message at Christmas time.

*Daniel Keeran, along with Jennie Keeran, is the co-founder of homelesspartners.com*

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# Growing a relationship

UNIVERSE WITHIN Gwen Randall-Young

*The greatest degree of inner tranquility comes from the development of love and compassion. The more we care for the happiness of others, the greater is our own sense of well-being.*

— Tenzin Gyatso, 14th Dalai Lama

IF WE LOOK back over past generations, we see many areas where progress has been made. Whether we think in terms of technological change, advances in medicine, environmental awareness or human rights, we can see how things are much better than they once were. We are infinitely better off than our grandparents and great grandparents.

Ironically and surprisingly, there is one area in which little seems to have changed. That is the area of intimate relationships. Certainly, there is more equality; women work outside the home and men change diapers, but I am not talking about these things. I am referring to the patterns that occur between couples.

Communication is still often an area of difficulty. Couples still get into cycles of conflict, anger and withdrawal and still have great difficulty understanding the other's point of view. Often, they are not even interested in how the other sees things, so determined are they that their view is the correct one. They get stuck

**We have a long way to go... We must value the happiness of others as much as our own and sometimes even put their happiness first.**

in adversarial positions and are unable to move past them.

Most marriage vows include something about loving, honouring and caring for the other. When a relationship is new, the individuals are excited to have this person in their life and tend to treat them well. Over time, when the newness is gone, sometimes things shift so the relationship becomes more of a competition or a contest and less of a cooperative venture.

So what happens to move things from wedded bliss to the divorce courts or to lives of quiet (or not so quiet) desperation? Ego happens.

True love is unconditional. Think of the love we have for a baby or a favourite pet. They may inconvenience us at times or make messes for us to clean up, but we take all of that in stride because we accept it will not always be perfect. We forget those things quickly and easily return to a place where we can give love freely.

## SPIRITUALITY

Although we may start out that way in relationships, ego takes us off course. We may have baggage in the form of old hurts or defensiveness that we bring to a relationship. Ego may have ideas about what it should receive and how it should be treated, without too much thought about what it should give to the other and how the other should be treated. Ego has tunnel vision that way.

When we are in conflict, ego has taken over. Even if things happen in the relationship that cause distress for one or the other, in an evolved relationship the sense of love and caring for the other allows for real listening and working it out.

Conflict tends to come when the other is not taken into consideration and is neither heard nor valued. When ego is busy defending itself or going on the attack, it is completely unavailable to the other. Often the one in distress ends up feeling even worse after bringing up the issue for there is an added sense of rejection and abandonment in the face of an unsympathetic, uncompassionate ego.

It is not surprising that this same pattern has existed for generations. Effective communication and relationship building seem to be a blind spot in our culture.

In school, children learn to write

essays and solve math problems, but not how to solve interpersonal problems and verbally communicate in a productive way when there are differences.

At home, if parents are still reliving the old patterns of their parents, the children will not learn new ways there either.

We have a long way to go. If we could simply grasp that we do not kick the dog or hit the baby and similarly we should not be harsh with loved ones, it might be a start. We must value the happiness of others as much as our own and sometimes even put their happiness first. And not simply to please them, but rather to show genuine compassion.

*Gwen Randall-Young is an author and psychotherapist in private practice. For articles, and information about her books, CDs and new "Creating Healthy Relationships" series, visit [www.gwen.ca](http://www.gwen.ca) See display ad this issue.*

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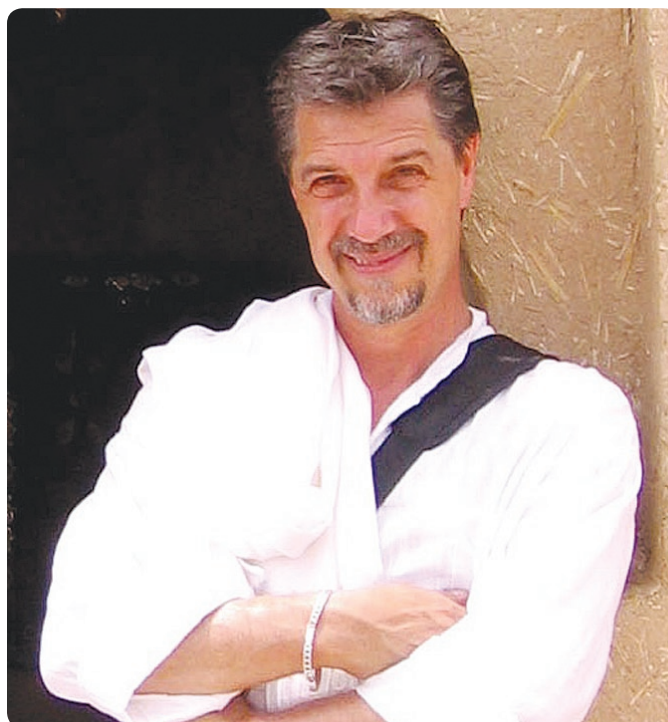
# Humanizing the economy

## co-operatives in the Age of Capital

by John Restakis

*What is now needed is a recasting of the economic paradigm. And so the question must be asked: was the enormous hope for change that was placed on the outcome of the 2009 election a massive act of self-deception?... America seems to be at the tipping point of something momentous, of hope affirmed and further propulsion toward reform, or hope denied and a turn to bitterness and disillusion - a most precarious moment.*

*Good ideas are contagious.*  
— Stefano Zamagni



John Restakis

WHEN, ON Jan 20 2009 Barack Obama took the oath of office it seemed for one glittering moment as if America had restored itself to its own highest ideals. The terrible waste and wantonness, the utter folly of the Bush era seemed at last to have been purged. It was like awaking from a very long and very dark dream.

Eighteen months later, the American people continue to come to terms with the enormity of the challenge that political action faces in the attempt to reform the economic template of our times. On every front, from regulating the worst excesses of Wall Street, to squeezing the feeblest of reforms from a corrupt health system, corporate power in the US has remained as intransigent and immovable a force as ever. The disrepute and crisis of trust that the capitalist system endured during the financial meltdown of the summer and fall of 2008 continues to cast a lengthening shadow despite the optimistic reports of “recovery” that still find their way into the news.<sup>1</sup> The massive bailouts of the financial sector seemed to have forestalled the freefall that everyone feared. But they have left a crushing legacy of debt that will cripple the American economy for decades to come.

It is only in the face of the most extreme resistance by the banking industry, and the protracted obstructionism of its proxies in the Republican Party, that Congress finally passed legislation intended to reign in the practices of a system that consigned the economic fate of the country, and much of the world, to the gambles of financial speculators.

Nothing at all has changed in the culture either of the financial institutions that brought the US economy to the brink, or within the wider culture of corporate America. The unconscionable bonuses, incentives, and wage packages that became so repellant in the heat of the crisis are still being doled out, with the excuse that things are now turning around, banks are making money again, talented people need to be fairly

rewarded. On the ground, things feel very different. The federal bailout money has failed to reach those that most need it. In countless communities, neighborhoods are being gutted as the wave of foreclosures continues at a rate of one every 13 seconds.<sup>2</sup> (On the bright side, hopeful house buyers can take a ForeclosuresToursRUs bus tour in places like Cape Coral in Florida and survey the wreckage with an eye to picking up a bargain.)<sup>3</sup>

It took the prospect of a catastrophic collapse not

question. It points to the essential contradiction of our time. For despite the hard won battles in Congress, we are still speaking of a corporate system, centered in the United States, but spreading, that is beyond control. Yet there remains a fervent desire, a spirit of hope for something better that is deeply moving, powerful and undeniable. America seems to be at the tipping point of something momentous, of hope affirmed and further propulsion toward reform, or hope denied and a turn to bitterness and disillusion – a most precarious moment.

If the hopes placed in the Obama victory turn out to be hollow, if the desired reforms don’t start to repair this fundamental schism between economics on the one hand and social values on the other, something terrible will befall America. For failure may well break the back of a fragile reform movement, one that is already uncertain of its capacity to prevail inside the bounds of America’s deeply compromised political institutions. The most promising recent opportunity for saving the US, and much of the world, from plunging further into a very dark age will have been lost. A charismatic and intelligent leader with a wave of popular support firmly at his back will have lost the one best chance for recasting the American story.

I am not using the phrase dark age lightly. I am speaking of an age in which the values that are essential to the prosperity and wellbeing of a society are eclipsed. One might debate what such values consist of. What I mean by them includes at minimum intellectual and political freedom, the value of *both* the individual *and* of community (not the exaltation

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**Behind the sunny, leafy, environmentally friendly new logo of BP, the true character of the company now stands naked. It turns out the oil giant, despite rebranding itself as an environmentally conscious corporation, had devoted a mere .03 of one percent of its profits to ensuring the safety of its operations. No amount of spin or marketing manipulation will ever address the utter disconnect between social values and social controls over corporate behaviour on the one hand and the immoral thirst for profits at any cost on the other.**  
.....

only of the US economy, but also the global economy with it, that prompted the call for change so urgently needed. Yet these changes, essential as they are, are a form of legislative triage. They target the emergency symptoms of a system fatally infected with an incurable malady – the separation of the market from its social moorings. For this to be addressed, more than legislation is required. What is now needed is a recasting of the economic paradigm. And so the question must be asked: was the enormous hope for change that was placed on the outcome of the 2009 election a massive act of self-deception? It is not a rhetorical

of one at the expense of the other), equity *and* economic opportunity and the notion of citizenship in an open and democratic society. But more than this, I am speaking of social and economic institutions that embody and advance these values.

The organization of economic life is fundamental, not only for the character of our societies, but also for the content of our personalities and the conduct of our relations with others. Should we lose sight of those elements that define a fully human life, and truly humane societies, no amount of material prosperity could ever substitute for such a loss. Our sense



of alienation and discontent will grow in proportion to the displacement of our social values by material ones. Not only are the western democracies set firmly on this path, but even more troubling, the contaminating influence of consumption ideology has drawn in resolutely anti-democratic states such as China, where prospects for the democratization of economic life are even more remote than they are in the west. Any time or place in which a single worldview comes to dominate the hearts and minds of men is almost by definition a dark age – ideologies of this type diminish people and society to the small and stifling measures that always serve narrow and self-perpetuating elites. Ideology always serves power. It was so in Communist Russia, it is true in the fundamentalist theocracies of Islam, and it is true for the corporate capitalism that has crystallized throughout the west and is being spread now like a contagion through the forces of globalization.

As most readers know, there was a long time in the west when the spirit of free intellectual and spiritual development that flared in the brief light of the Classical Age grew dim. It was eclipsed by a Christian religious dogma that over time became totalitarian, sustained by absolutist religious institutions that were utterly intolerant of dissent. Europe entered a long sleep of forgetfulness. There were periods of awakening, of relative openness and discovery, but they were rare and insufficiently strong to alter the overall stagnation of the era.<sup>4</sup> Not until the rediscovery of classical knowledge in the 14th century, especially the works of Aristotle, did Europe as a whole recover from its stupor. It was thanks to the preservation and study of classical works in Islamic centres of learning in Spain, Morocco, Alexandria, and Baghdad that the ideas of a lost age eventually returned, along with the philosophical and scientific works of Islamic thinkers like Avicenna and Averroes who had been influenced by them. In the monasteries of Europe also, those works that had survived were carefully preserved; diligently copied out by monks for a time when they might again reveal their worth. When they did, they not only opened out the horizons of cultural and scientific achievement, they enriched and deepened the understanding and practice of Christianity itself, including the revolution in theology prompted by the marriage of classical philosophy with Catholicism by thinkers like Abélard, John Duns Scotus, William of Ockham and Thomas Aquinas.

There is a parallel to be drawn between the omnipotence of the church in the age of religion and the analogous influence of the corporation in our own age. In each, the requirements of an imperial ideology spawned the social, cultural and psychological forms that were necessary to its preservation, not only in public life but even more importantly in the interior life of the individual. The external and internal aspects of these systems were, and are, mutually reinforcing. But there is a profound difference between these parallel worlds. It concerns the radically different conception of humankind that each personifies. They are like the inverse of each other. In one, the religious attributes of faith and obedience predominate. These, in turn, fix the individual inside the immutable structures of class while uniting them in the spiritual body of the holy church. As an ideal, this is a universe that is both social and spiritual, drawing forth and embodying the human attributes of service, sacrifice, and ultimately the redemptive power of faith. It is also profoundly conservative, anti-democratic and authoritarian. In the other, materialism and the satisfaction of personal desire predominate. In the ideology of consumerism avarice – not faith – is the propelling force. In turn,

the idealized human personality is individualistic, self-serving, competitive and implicitly anti-social. The ideal of our capitalist age is a privatized paradise, one that is realized by the satisfaction of our very fleshly desires here on earth, not in some hoped-for afterlife. The liberal notion of personal freedom as the pursuit of selfish ends is intimately bound up in this strange vision of the good life. On its surface, it appears as a system of perpetual change, as a constant process of destruction and reinvention, but at bottom it too ends up serving authoritarian ends.

It is easy to see that both these idealizations are simplistic and one-sided. But that's what makes them idealizations – they are not meant to be descriptive, but rather prescriptive. They are symbolic representations that embody our ideals and guide us toward their realization. Given this fact, how can we say with any confidence that the human ideal of the modern age is superior to the one it displaced? From the standpoints of economic achievement and personal and political freedom, it most assuredly is. But the materialization and secularization of the human personality has also cut us off from our social and spiritual foundations. The challenge of our time is to reclaim them without sacrificing the enormous achievements in material prosperity and human freedom that have come with modernity. We have to humanize our economies. This is the essential role of co-operation in the age of capital.

## Happiness matters

The case for the gradual ascendance of the co-operative model rests on (at least) three factors. The first is the changing nature of advanced capitalist societies and the transition from scarcity to post-scarcity economies. The second is the accelerating crisis of environ-

.....  
**Any time or place in which a single worldview comes to dominate the hearts and minds of men is almost by definition a dark age – ideologies of this type diminish people and society to the small and stifling measures that always serve narrow and self-perpetuating elites.**  
.....

mental degradation and resource depletion. The third is the growing movement for global justice and the search for economic models that institutionalize fairness.

The transition from scarcity to post scarcity societies in the latter half of the twentieth century represents a watershed in human development. By post scarcity, I do not mean the elimination of poverty. Poverty remains a problem in advanced capitalist societies, as does the growing disparity in wealth. In scarcity societies, poverty is very much a function of whether economic systems can generate the wealth necessary to meet the basic survival needs of a population as a whole. Even in these societies, as we know, a minority will always accumulate the resources they need to meet, or surpass, their basic needs. In post scarcity societies, poverty is not primarily a consequence of the productive capacity of the economic system. Rather, poverty is a consequence of the unequal *distribution* of wealth, which, in turn, comes from the inequality embedded both in the economic paradigm *and* the political system that sustains it. Moreover, even the poor in post scarcity societies are living at a level that is far above basic survival.

The solution of basic survival needs on a mass level in much of western society has given rise to an entire-

ly new kind of civilization. For the first time in human history, societies can be organized around the pursuit of non-survival ends, not only for a privileged minority as in the past, but for everyone. This has prompted a revolutionary effect on concepts of personal identity, on the prospect of personal freedom, and on the pursuit of meaningful life goals. Post scarcity has made the pursuit of happiness a viable goal for societies as a whole, not just privileged individuals.

But the enormous liberation of human energy and capacity that the resolution of scarcity made possible is now being consumed in the pursuit of ends that are not only contrary to the realization of happiness at a personal level, but to the erosion of the social basis of happiness as a socio/cultural possibility. Post scarcity society is for the first time capable of realizing happiness as a broad social project while simultaneously undermining the basis for its realization. For this paradox to be solved, the restoration of social capital through institutions that incorporate and generate reciprocity is essential. The social poverty trap that western capitalism has set for itself is being recognized at different levels – academically, politically, culturally, socially – and the decline of social bonds along with the growing alienation of individuals in society is being noted with alarm. At a personal level, there is a growing thirst for something other than material consumption, and co-operatives are being viewed as a means of delivering the kinds of social and relational goods that are being depleted by commercial culture. Throughout Europe and North America, co-ops that provide personalized services are the fastest growing sector for new co-op development, representing a new wave within the movement. Co-operatives increase the availability of relational goods, which are central to the production of happiness. Whether in elder care,

or services for the disabled, or health services, co-ops are responding to a growing public concern over the depletion of social goods. But there is a deeper, far more intimate dimension to this new, post scarcity reality.

If it is true that personal identity has become the locus of consumer culture in post scarcity economies; the co-operative then assumes a central role in providing to individuals a means of realizing a sense of personal identity that is both meaningful and attuned to the need for profound change at the level of economic practice. Because co-operatives recognize and reinforce the social dimensions of identity, they offer the opportunity for individuals to select them as a means of realizing life goals that supercede instrumentality or consumption.

In a post-scarcity identity economy, the central issue becomes “How do I create an identity that can deliver a high level of life satisfaction?” Past a \$30-40,000 threshold, this question is not related to income. And if consumer culture, and the economic forms that embody it, are incapable of delivering life satisfaction and wellbeing at this basic emotional level, the human need for social connection as a vital dimension of personal happiness will drive people to the kinds of institutions that can provide it. Co-operatives are chief among these. They *cont'd pg. 39...*





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# Bringing tigers back from the brink

Protecting habitat by linking human and environmental security will save tigers

by Dr. Keith Martin

**I**T IS HARD to imagine a world without tigers. Yet today, there are fewer than 3,200 of these magnificent predators left on the planet. In the past century, their populations have plummeted from 100,000 to only about 2,500 breeding adults.

This catastrophic decline in tiger populations is a direct result of two things: 1) habitat destruction, and 2) relentless hunting for their bones,

claws and teeth, which are used to make ornaments and products that falsely claim to have medicinal value. To save these animals, rapid and effective action must be taken to protect their habitats and reduce demand for their body parts. Additionally, domestic laws should be strengthened to prosecute those involved in the poaching, trade, or sale of tiger products and penalties should be increased and enforced

for those identified as being involved in these activities.

## World's first Tiger Summit

On November 21, the 13 countries where tigers still roam (TRCs) met in St. Petersburg, Russia, for a four-day summit to launch a last ditch effort to save this magnificent animal. At this meeting, two major initiatives were addressed:

To protect tiger habitats by supporting local projects, such as eco and ethno-tourism opportunities that have small environmental footprints and which also can generate substantial revenues. Funds from these ventures can be used to protect and expand critical habitats and to finance the economic, health and infrastructure needs of the people who live near these biospheres. When people who live near ecosystems receive direct economic benefits from them, they will preserve them. Demonstrating that the habitats of tigers have greater value preserved than destroyed creates a personal incentive for people to protect them.

To reduce the demand for tiger parts. An international public awareness campaign must be started that clearly shows that tiger parts are utterly ineffective at treating medical problems. National and international naturopathic associations should become partners to spread this message.

The annihilation of tigers is not an

esoteric issue. Tiger habitats can have immense, long-term, sustainable economic and ecological value to the people who live near them. They can also act as carbon sinks and buffers to deforestation and the degradation of water sources.

Human security and environmental security are two halves of the same whole. Initiatives that support both of these objectives will preserve the remarkable biodiversity on our planet and will enable us to save keystone species like tigers. It would be hard to imagine a world without them.

To support the Global Tiger Initiative, visit [www.globaltigerinitiative.org](http://www.globaltigerinitiative.org). To learn more about the Save Tigers Now campaign, visit [www.icforum.info](http://www.icforum.info) and [www.savetigersnow.org](http://www.savetigersnow.org).

*Dr. Keith Martin is a physician and Member of Canada's Parliament, as well as the founder and chair of the Canadian Parliament's first All-Party International Conservation Caucus. In 2010, he launched the International Conservation Forum ([www.icforum.info](http://www.icforum.info)), which offers conservationists, environmentalists, scientists, NGOs and the general public a platform to share research findings and solutions to urgent environmental challenges. Most recently, Dr. Martin launched an international campaign to save rhinos from extinction. Learn more at [www.icforum.info/category/rhinos/](http://www.icforum.info/category/rhinos/)*

## Tiger Summit: the outcome

The goal of this high-profile Summit, initiated by Russian president Vladimir Putin and World Bank chief Robert Zoellick, was to galvanize the public into supporting the goal of doubling the number of tigers in the wild by 2022. The Summit ended with sustained concern over the loss of the world's tigers, despite \$330m worth of donor pledges to make living tigers more valuable while alive.

At the present time, a dead tiger can net a poacher up to \$50,000. This illegal practice has decimated tiger populations worldwide. Unfortunately, the Summit did not conclude with the implementation of a measure to ensure the punishment of individuals poaching and trafficking tigers and it is significant that China, which constitutes the largest market for tiger parts, did not strongly commit to ending the practice. A number of celebrities also supported the Summit, with actor Leonardo DiCaprio pledging \$1m of his own money.



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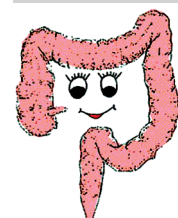
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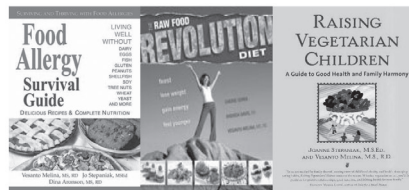
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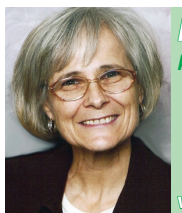


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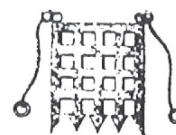
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*...Tolle from p. 17*

temporary world are less rigid than in ancient cultures, there are still many pre-established functions or roles that people readily identify with and which thus become part of the ego. This causes human interactions to become inauthentic, dehumanized, alienating. Those pre-established roles may give you a somewhat comforting sense of identity, but ultimately, you lose yourself in them. The functions people have in hierarchical organizations, such as the military, the church, a government institution or large corporation, easily lend themselves to becoming role identities. Authentic human interactions become impossible when you lose yourself in a role.

Some pre-established roles we could call social archetypes. To mention just a few: the middle-class housewife (not as prevalent as it used to be, but still widespread); the tough macho male; the female seductress; the "nonconformist" artist or performer; a person of "culture" (a role quite common in Europe) who displays a knowledge of literature, fine art and music in the same way others might display an expensive dress or car. And then there is the universal role of adult. When you play that role, you take yourself and life very seriously. Spontaneity, light heartedness and joy are not part of that role.

The hippie movement that originated on the West Coast of the United States in the 1960s and then spread throughout the Western world came out of many young people's rejection of social archetypes, of roles, of pre-established patterns of behaviour as well as egoically based social and economic structures. They refused to play the roles their parents and society wanted to impose on them. Significantly, it coincided with the horrors of the Vietnam War, in which more than 57,000 young Americans and three million Vietnamese died and through which the insanity of the system and the underlying mindset was exposed for all to see.

Whereas in the 1950s, most Americans were still extremely conformist in thought and behaviour, in the 1960s,

millions of people began to withdraw their identification with a collective conceptual identity because the insanity of the collective was so obvious. The hippie movement represented a loosening of the hitherto rigid egoic structures in the psyche of humanity. The movement itself degenerated and came to an end, but it left behind an opening, and not just in those who were part of the movement. This made it possible for ancient Eastern wisdom and spirituality to move west and play an essential part in the awakening of global consciousness.

*Excerpted from A New Earth: Awakening to Your Life's Purpose by Eckhart Tolle. Reprinted by arrangement with Dutton, a member of Penguin Group (USA), Inc. Copyright © Eckhart Tolle, 2005.*

*...GE food from p. 32*

table.

Before the Liberals and Conservatives shut down hearings on Bill C-474, the House of Commons Agriculture Committee heard testimony from groups representing conventional and organic alfalfa growers who described how GM would inevitably ruin farmers. Conservative and Liberal MPs could barely believe this revelation and rather than pursue this line of inquiry, they shut down the hearings. On October 28, the president of the National Farmers Union was turned away from Parliament Hill when the scheduled hearings in which he was called to participate were cancelled. The debate on Bill C-474 was so effective up to that point that the Liberals and Conservatives built an escape hatch in the form of a new motion to the Agriculture Committee: that the Committee "conduct a study on the status of the Canadian biotechnology sector, in which it travels to the universities across Canada where this technology is primarily being undertaken, and that it recommend, where necessary, legisla-

tive, policy and regulatory changes in order to foster an innovative and fertile biotechnology industry in Canada."

This study would neither address nor explore the problem Bill C-474 identifies. Instead, it would provide the biotech industry with a public relations platform while allowing the Liberals and Conservatives to tell constituents they are doing something, however useless, about this controversial GE issue.

Bill C-474 identifies the core problem with genetic engineering: there is no democratic decision making process with regard to genetic engineering and GE crops can and do harm the very people they are supposed to benefit - farmers. The tremendous industry backlash over Bill C-474 shows that, when farmers and food come first, Monsanto is last. The final vote on Bill C-474 should take place in mid-December. Take action at [www.cban.ca/474](http://www.cban.ca/474)

*Lucy Sharratt is the coordinator of the Canadian Biotechnology Action Network. [www.cban.ca](http://www.cban.ca)*

*...Thank-you from p. 36*

will be available free of charge for you to examine for yourself for all time. Does it really matter these days whether Fox News decides to cover it for you? It is 2010. We, the people, have the power to report for ourselves. And this being so, why (oh why?) should we ever tune the TV to a channel that is going to spoon-feed us a biased, bigoted, fear-based point of view?

After providing pre-show entertainment while we enjoyed one another's company and shared our food and our stories - it takes a while to say "Hi" to 250,000 people, but everyone did their very best - Jon came out on stage. As he looked out at the crowd, he seemed almost dazed for a second and I suddenly wondered what it must be like for this unusual fellow, this Jon Stewart Leibowitz dude who so many of us love,

and others love to hate. I mean, the guy starts out in life as a comedian and here he finds himself at a mere 47 years of age, being heralded as the 'most trusted man in America' - standing on a stage in the nation's capital with something like .08 percent of the entire population of the United States waiting quietly and politely in front of him, trusting him to give them a dose of sanity in a bizarre world.

Oh, and please also run for president as well. If you wouldn't mind. Well, Jon, I guess you've made your bed by being so darn honest and essential; now you must lie in it.

Some members of the media have been demanding to know 'What This Was.' They would like a label to stick on the jam jar, please, before they shove it into the cupboard of history and turn to the next Tweet. Well, I was there (unlike many of the media). And so I will tell you curious folks What It Was. Are you ready? Get a pen.

It was nothing more nor less than a massive convergence of positive human energy, made up of us folks who are tired of the bad, bad behaviour from those who have been entrusted with positions of power. It was us saying, "Wow, this guy Stewart is giving us a chance to be heard? What day? We'll be there!"

It wasn't a 'fake protest' or a 'faux rally' or any breed of talking-head comedy-pundit variety show. It wasn't about Democrats or Republicans. This was an historic twenty-first century phenomenon, a statement of intention and ultimately, a vehicle for those "People" mentioned in that first bit of your Constitution. They would like you to know they are having trouble being heard these days over the sound of your irresponsible journalism. Consider taking it down a notch for America (and the neighbours).

So from these two Canadians, thank you so much Jon. For the opportunity to meet the real America. Like the sign said: "We Should Do This More Often."

[www.jonstewartisthemostimportantmaninamerica.com](http://www.jonstewartisthemostimportantmaninamerica.com)



# GE food and animals

## the year in review

### ENVIRONMENT

by Lucy Sharratt

**S**TARTING WITH the humble alfalfa seed and ending with a genetically engineered (GE) Atlantic salmon, the controversies in 2010 over genetic engineering multiplied and tumbled over each other, with the year ending in unprecedented uncertainty.

This year, the GE Atlantic salmon and GE “Envriopig” began lurching towards commercialization in both the US and Canada. The fate of these GE animals, and that of the unassuming alfalfa seed, will shape the future of our food system and of democracy.

Alfalfa seeds are tiny and generally keep a low profile, but this year the little perennial seeds were in the limelight during a showdown between Monsanto and organic farmers. It is no exaggeration to say that GE alfalfa threatens the future of the entire North American organic food and farming system because of the diverse and unique role that alfalfa plays in many different types of farming, as well as the inevitability of contamination. In 2010, Monsanto was forced to go to the US Supreme Court to try to get its GE Roundup Ready alfalfa in the ground; the company essentially lost the case and it is still illegal to plant GE alfalfa in the US. The USDA is being forced by the courts to publish an Environmental Impact Statement, but once it is complete plantings could begin. Canadian organic farmers shared their experience of GE contamination of organic canola with the USDA in the hopes of swaying the outcome against Monsanto. Meanwhile, here in Canada,

conventional and organic growers continue to lobby the federal government to try to find a way to stop GE alfalfa.

In a parallel case, organic farmers in the US successfully challenged the GE sugarbeet (white sugarbeet for sugar processing). In August, a US court ruled the department had failed to conduct an adequate analysis of the impacts of GE sugarbeets on farmers and the environment. The beets were therefore ruled illegal to plant or sell until the USDA completed a full environmental assessment. However, because this study may not be finished until 2012, Monsanto and the sugar industry have pressured the USDA by proposing plantings next spring. All of Canada’s sugarbeet seeds, grown in Alberta and Southern Ontario, come from the Willamette Valley in Oregon so if GE sugarbeets cannot be planted in the US, there may be no GE sugarbeet seed for Canada.

#### The year of “We told you so”

In a predictable, though unfortunate, “We told you so” moment (one of too many in 2010), university researchers found transgenes present in 80 percent of the wild canola plants they tested in North Dakota. The canola provides new evidence that GE crop plants can survive and thrive in the wild, possibly for decades. But this is not the first documented escape into the wild. It was recently revealed that the Oregon Department of Agriculture and the USDA refused to alert the public that GE Roundup Ready bentgrass spread from a test plot in Western Idaho to irri-

gation ditches in Eastern Oregon. The feral GE bentgrass is a warning about the future of GE alfalfa. But, of course, this contamination brings up the particular problem of herbicide tolerance where the feral plants are engineered to survive specific herbicide sprayings. Most GE crops on the market are herbicide tolerant and the majority of these are

company. It was a difficult year for the world’s biggest seed and biotech company as the US Justice Department intensified its antitrust investigation, farmers in Haiti burned Monsanto’s hybrid corn seed donation and Monsanto began giving rebates to farmers so they could buy competitor’s herbicides in order to kill Roundup resistant weeds.

.....  
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.....

Roundup Ready, resistant to Monsanto’s brand-name herbicide “Roundup” and its active ingredient glyphosate.

Overuse of Monsanto’s GE Roundup Ready soy, corn, canola and cotton is now showing a predictable result. 2010 was the year of the superweed. Palmer amaranth, or pigweed, is among 10 weed species in 20 US states, and one in Ontario, that have become resistant to glyphosate. The rapid spread of glyphosate resistant pigweed is a major agronomic failure of Monsanto’s Roundup Ready technology and an economic shock to farmers. In the US cotton belt, the pigweed is forcing farmers to revert to more toxic herbicides such as paraquat and they are abandoning their cotton-picking machines in favour of hired labour. This problem has actually triggered a race among chemical companies to develop new GM crops or to use old herbicides to attack the resistant weeds. “The biotech industry is taking us into a more pesticide-dependent agriculture than they’ve always promised and we need to be going in the opposite direction,” said Bill Freese at the Center for Food Safety in Washington.


Monsanto also overreached in 2010 and is now feeling the pinch. In 2009, the US and Canada granted approval for Monsanto’s new eight-trait “SmartStax” corn, a combination of different insect resistant and herbicide tolerant traits with a whopping price hike of up to 42 percent. Monsanto’s stocks fell significantly at the end of this year when results showed farmers were not buying “SmartStax” in levels projected by the

Monsanto is also being investigated in West Virginia for possibly misleading growers who were promised improved yields from Roundup Ready 2 Yield soybean. After converting its chemical business to “seeds and traits,” Monsanto is beginning to show the strain of a technology that has yet to fulfill its early promise and struggling with all of its anticipated troubles.

#### Farmers first!

This year, for the first time in our 15-year history with genetically engineered crops, farmers had a voice in Parliament and our MPs debated some of the real issues. This debate was thanks to Bill C-474, which would require that “an analysis of potential harm to export markets be conducted before the sale of any new genetically engineered seed is permitted.” This one-line Private Members bill challenged the biotechnology industry to defend its practice of introducing GE crops, even when contamination will ruin the export markets of Canadian farmers. Canadian regulation does not include, or even allow, consideration of the question of economic impact of GE crops and there is no space for farmers to share their knowledge or voice their concerns. In 2001, flax farmers predicted GE flax would ruin their European market and they were proven right in 2009 when GM contamination shut down our flax exports. Despite this clear case, the Liberal and Conservative parties refuse to acknowledge there is a problem, even with the partial solution of Bill C-474 on the *cont’d pg. 31...*


# SUPPORT Bill C-474



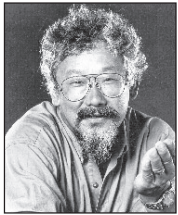
# FARMERS FIRST!

**TAKE ACTION! Send Your Letter at [cban.ca](http://cban.ca)**

**Bill C-474 would “require that an analysis of potential harm to export markets be conducted before the sale of any new genetically engineered seed is permitted.”**







# Sustain ban on Gulf drilling

**SCIENCE MATTERS** David Suzuki with Faisal Moola

**W**E SAW what happened when the Deepwater Horizon drilling rig exploded in the Gulf of Mexico, killing 11 workers and spewing oil into the Gulf of Mexico for three months. Imagine a similar incident in an inland sea one-sixth the size of the Gulf of Mexico. It's a very real fear for people in the five provinces along the Gulf of St. Lawrence – Quebec, Newfoundland and Labrador, Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia – as well as the French territory of St. Pierre and Miquelon.

The Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Petroleum Board recently approved a permit allowing Nova Scotia-

Gulf of St. Lawrence provinces and territories, one jurisdiction should not be allowed to exploit the resources without approval from all the other jurisdictions that would be affected by an accident. Researchers estimate that only about 15 percent of any oil spill can be cleaned up and the damage can last for years. More than 20 years after the Exxon Valdez spill off the Alaska coast, its effects are still being felt.

The Quebec government recently released the results of a strategic environmental assessment that concluded the negative impacts of oil and gas exploitation in the estuary of the St. Lawrence would far outweigh the benefits. That

**Researchers estimate that only about 15 percent of any oil spill can be cleaned up and the damage can last for years.**

based Corridor Resources Inc. to explore for oil and gas at a location called the Old Harry prospect in the Gulf, halfway between the Magdalen Islands and Cape Anguille in western Newfoundland near the Quebec border. The company began seismic testing this fall and could start drilling as early as next year.

The Gulf of St. Lawrence represents about two-thirds of Canada's overall national maritime-related gross domestic product. It provides a unique and fragile environment for more than 2,200 species of invertebrates and 19 species of marine mammals and it is culturally, biologically and socially important for the people of Quebec and Atlantic Canada.

Scientific studies, as well as reports by the governments of Quebec and Canada, have concluded that even during the oil and gas exploration phase, sound waves from seismic surveys can disturb and damage marine wildlife, including endangered species such as blue whales and cod. But drilling causes the most concern. Computer simulations by the David Suzuki Foundation's Quebec office show that a spill of 10,000 barrels of oil a day over 10 days in different seasons could have a devastating impact on all five provinces along the Gulf of St. Lawrence, affecting tourism, fisheries and marine life. In the Magdalen Islands, which are near Old Harry, fishing directly and indirectly affects 75 percent of the local population and generates annual revenues of about \$78 million. A spill in this area would have a catastrophic effect on the people of the Magdalen Islands.

Because a spill would affect all the

led to a ban on exploration in the estuary, but not in the Gulf itself. Quebec already had a moratorium on exploration in its Gulf waters, but that could be lifted by late 2012 if the second part of the strategic environmental assessment concludes the benefits of exploration outweigh the risks.

Given the importance of the Gulf of St. Lawrence to the provinces that border it, and indeed to all of Canada, we just can't afford to risk a spill like the one that devastated the Gulf of Mexico. The David Suzuki Foundation has joined other organizations in calling on the federal and provincial governments to develop an integrated management plan for the Gulf and to impose an immediate moratorium on oil and gas exploration and drilling for the entire Gulf. You can help by sending a letter to federal and provincial government representatives supporting this call.

Our dependence on fossil fuels is not sustainable. In burning these fuels for energy, we cause pollution and greenhouse gases that contribute to climate change. Exploration and drilling threatens the health of our waterways and all the life that depends on them. The sooner we reduce our reliance on fossil fuels, through energy conservation and by developing cleaner, renewable sources of energy, the better off we'll all be. It will certainly be better for the Gulf of St. Lawrence and the people who live there.

*Write to our government protesting drilling in the Gulf at <http://action.david-suzuki.org/st-lawrence>*



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# Comic conciliation

## Stewart and Colbert's Rally to Restore Sanity

article and photograph by Geoff Olson



Geoff Olson's tea-sipping beaver was a big hit at the Seattle Rally to Restore Sanity.

ON OCT 29, just a few days prior to the mid-term elections, Comedy Central's Stephen Colbert and Jon Stewart hosted the "Rally to Restore Sanity and/or Fear" in Washington DC. Although the "fake news" anchors disavowed any partisan purpose, the event at the National Mall was obviously structured as a progressive, comic response to the Tea Party's vocal gatherings on the right.

When I heard of the Seattle Rally to Restore Sanity, an independently organized offshoot of the Washington, DC event, I was off and running. I drew up a sign of a tea-sipping beaver, with the caption "Canadians for Sanity" and drove south down the I-5.

On a drizzly Saturday morning at Westlake Centre, a string of comics and musicians kept the mood light for a crowd of over 2,000, with the MC leading the crowd in the Hokey Pokey as they waited on the big-screen feed of Stewart/Colbert's gig from the capital. The sea of signs in downtown Seattle ranged from courteous ("Wage Civility") to comic ("Step Away From the Tea") to quotable ("Legalize Science") to cosmic ("Be Nice, the World Ends in 2012 Anyway") to incomprehensible ("I shaved my balls for THIS?"). My Canadian beaver placard was a big hit with the Yanks.

Over at the National Mall, the entertainment was sharp and colourful. Yusuf Islam (formerly Cat Stevens) performed *Peace Train* and was interrupted halfway through by Ozzy Osbourne's *Crazy Train*. The two settled on a duet of *Love Train*. *The Daily Show* host got in some nice shots against US news media, calling it a "24 hour conflictinator" out to terrify the republic with scare stories of everything from underwear bombers to bird flu.

### A backyard party for progressives

My optimistic self was pleasantly surprised that Stewart and Colbert's rally reportedly sparked 1,160 mini-rallies by expat Americans, in 84 countries around the world. According to estimates from aerial shots, the rally at the National Mall was at least twice the size of the Tea Party's "Rally for Honour," hosted several months earlier in the same spot by the blubbing, bloviating Glenn Beck. Who could complain, given such a turnout? As one online commentator said, "Fussing at Stewart for not using his 'political power' is like

complaining that Martin Sheen didn't turn out to be as good as a president as you thought he'd be."

But my pessimist self was already stirring by the time I returned home. I recalled a lone figure standing out on the margins of the Seattle rally, wearing a ghoulish mask and holding up a mock-up newspaper with the words "OBEY" across the top. The masked man's anti-corporate message didn't quite fit in with the soft-focus, jokey memes floating above the smiling faces at Westlake Centre.

I thought back to another scene from Seattle a decade earlier when this masked figure would have fit right in. In late November 1999, the streets were packed, from the downtown core to the stadium, with tens of thousands of people, many in colourful garb, joined in song and solidarity. The carnivalesque, but uncompromising, atmosphere of the 1999 "Battle of Seattle" led to a surprise victory when activists surrounding the convention centre shut down the World Trade Organization through nonviolent resistance. The worldwide attention altered the complexion of several trade meetings thereafter. For a brief time, it seemed that people – that is, engaged citizens from outside the political or business world – could put their shoulder to the wheel of history and actually move it.

This rally in Seattle, like its big brother in DC, had a different spirit. Critics say it seemed more like an anti-protest – a meta-event for irony-minded slacktivists. While that's probably too harsh an estimate, I heard no references at either rally, serious or otherwise, to BP's oil spill in the Gulf, Wall Street corruption, the war in Afghanistan and Iraq or the desperation facing millions of Americans who are a paycheque away from homelessness. What I saw was a crowd of progressives having a big backyard party and passing around a Zinfandel-stained petition for more policy discussion. There were plenty of belly laughs, but no fire in the belly.

Watching the results of the US midterm elections a few days later, with a wave of Tea Party candidates shifting the US political spectrum that much further to the right, I began to understand some of the online criticism of the Washington gig, including *The World Socialist* web site's headline: "Stewart/Colbert Rally preaches compromise and complacency. Many of those participating were drawn from relatively insulated lay-

ers of the middle class for whom the rally's central theme – that there is not much to be angry about – resonated, at least to some extent." Obama's Democrats are continuing the pro-corporate and pro-war policies of the previous Republican administration, yet "the basic theme of the event was the need for a political consensus between the two parties in Washington and their allies in the media."

Comic Bill Maher disputed Stewart's notion that the left is just as much to blame for the level of discourse in the US as the right. He rejected his colleague's "false equivalence" of MSNBC populist firebrand Keith Olbermann to Glenn Beck. "Keith Olbermann is right when he says he's not the equivalent of Glenn Beck. One reports facts; the other one is very close to playing with his poop," said Maher.

My optimistic self resonated with the light hearted tone of the rally. But my pessimist self was still skeptical. Do the times really call for polite offers of reasoned dialogue from Blue State progressives when furious, Fox-fed Red Staters aren't even interested in facts?

### Big guns and blind alleys

Hope has two beautiful daughters, said St. Augustine. Their names are anger and courage: anger at the way things are and courage to see that they do not remain the way they are. It's one of those ironies of history, already forgotten, that much of the Tea Party scene began as grassroots activism protesting Wall Street corruption, endless war and outsourced, offshore labour. In other words, the activists were addressing the real sources of their discontent. The tune changed when Rupert Murdoch's Fox News Network and right wing "rage radio" got in front of the parade and led the movement down a blind alley with ghost stories about gay marriage, the illegal immigrant menace and a Kenyan-born, Muslim-Leninist president. Wealthy benefactors like the billionaire Koch brothers ensured the money kept flowing into faux-grassroot groups like Americans for Prosperity, ensuring the movement kept focusing on the wrong targets. The Tea Party is now the well-funded tool of corporate elite, which already has at its disposal a host of well-funded think tanks, an overbuilt US defense establishment, a craven mainstream media and a rubberstamping US Supreme Court.



The Tea party has big guns behind it. But what armaments do the American left have? A handful of underfunded squirt guns like the ACLU, some low-circulation magazines like *The Nation* and *Harper's* and clever ironists like Colbert and Stewart. "We're not running for anything," Stewart told reporters in his post-Rally press conference. "We do television shows for people that like them. And we hope people continue to like them so Comedy Central can continue to sell beer to young people."

Like most self-deprecating remarks, this statement reveals as much as it conceals. Comedy Central's parent company, Viacom, is a giant conglomerate with no interest in overly confrontational commentary. Stewart is clever and witty and his comic routines often nail the absurdities of the military-industrial entertainment complex. But he certainly learned his limit in April of 2009, after an episode of *The Daily Show* in which he described Harry Truman as a "war criminal" for ordering the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In the next evening's episode, Stewart didn't apologize for the statement. Actually, he grovelled for forgiveness. He was obviously reciting the scripture from the suits: war criminals come from other lands, never the homeland.

The mere fact that many Americans now look to a stand-up comic for reliable information is a measure of how much the US news industry has failed its audience. As for the Rally itself, certainly, there are reasons for the non-confrontational atmosphere. At best, serious protestors across the Anglo-American world are utterly ignored, as they were in the millions during the nationwide anti-war protests in the Bush years. At worst, they are harassed, corralled and arrested en masse, as they were at the 2004 trade summit in Miami and the 2009 G20 meeting in Toronto, the scene of the biggest mass arrests in Canadian history.

So the tepid Stewart/Colbert rally can be read as: a) dangerous appeasement with the far right; b) one of the few remaining avenues to bring people together who have no common cause with fear-friendly, right-wing extremists; c) a harbinger of a new kind of people power; d) all of the above.

### The Liberal betrayal and yesterday's reality

Thirty years ago, president Ronald Reagan began a fire sale of the American republic through "supply-side economics," a euphemism for corporate tax cuts, deregulation and downsizing. Bill Clinton, possibly the greatest betrayer of the republic's working class, piled even more public assets and services on to the bonfire, adding trade-deal kerosene. By the nineties, neoconservative radicals had control of the White House and the grey eminence of the US tax-cutting movement, Grover Norquist, used the imagery of baby killing to describe his mission: "I don't want to abolish government. I simply want to reduce it to the size where I can drag it into the bathroom and drown it in the bathtub."

The Glass-Steagall Act served as a post-Depression firewall between investment banks and commercial banks. By legislating it out of existence, Bill Clinton handed out Zippo lighters to the pyromaniacs on Wall Street. The liberal wing of the mainstream media offered little intellectual resistance as the flames rose in the Bush years, with the elite's hired guns playing Ponzi schemes on the backs of homeowners.

Does the liberal class actually have some responsibility for the rise of the Tea Party movement? In an article for Truthdig.com, former *NYT* war correspondent Chris Hedges argues for the prosecution:

"The lunatic fringe of the Republican Party, which looks set to make sweeping gains in the midterm elections, is the direct result of a collapse of liberalism. It is the product of bankrupt liberal institutions, includ-

ing the press, the church, universities, labour unions, the arts and the Democratic Party. The legitimate rage being expressed by disenfranchised workers toward the college-educated liberal elite, who abetted or did nothing to halt the corporate assault on the poor and the working class of the last 30 years, is not misplaced. The liberal class is guilty. The liberal class, which continues to speak in the prim and obsolete language of policies and issues, refused to act. It failed to defend traditional liberal values during the long night of corporate assault in exchange for its position of privilege and comfort in the corporate state. The virulent right-wing backlash we now experience is an expression of the liberal class' flagrant betrayal of the citizenry."

And that, in a nutshell, is why the Tea Party constituency is so angry. They certainly have the wrong answers, but they have a visceral understanding they've been screwed over by the managerial class – the top 20 percent that acts as a buffer zone of apologists for the top two percent.

So what does this sorry state of affairs have to do with us, shivering in the northern fringes of empire? Plenty. Here, too, social services have been in decline since the eighties and wages in real dollars have been in decline, even as corporate profits and compensation have skyrocketed. The dismantling of the Canadian welfare state kicked off 30 years ago by Brian Mulroney, who joined Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan in the Anglo-American program of public sector rollback. Not all the betrayals were from the right. Some of the most extreme cuts in the Canadian social safety net came under the watch of Liberal Prime Minister Paul Martin, a former shipping magnate.

The US has its A and B team of corporate capitalism, in the form of Republicans and Democrats. We have it in the form of the federal Conservatives and Liberals. The current Prime Minister, Stephen Harper, is ideologically joined at the hip with the Christian conservative US right wing. His 'theoconservatives' are itching at a majority so they can remake the nation in their image.

So why on Earth would any government want to

have signed off on new austerity programs that offer no comfort to the afflicted and they certainly did nothing to afflict the comfortable – the very architects of the financial crisis. We're talking about a global-scale heist, the greatest transfer of wealth in human history. The people of Greece have experienced the effects of it firsthand and the people of Britain are up next. And even though Canadian banks didn't participate in some of the worst excesses of Wall Street, all bets are off if Harper gets his majority.

The mainstream media give only a partial picture of these downward trends. "Watching mainstream TV is like living in yesterday's reality; nothing is really about where we are heading as a species, as a nation, as a people or as individuals. It's not really 'news' at all; it's yesterday's vision of what is 'real'," notes Vancouver writer Monika Ullman in an email.

### Pessimism of the intellect, optimism of the will

The Italian political philosopher Antonio Gramsci once said he was "a pessimist because of intelligence, but an optimist because of will." They may seem to be in opposition, but they are complementary modes for navigating a complicated world. One represents the spirit of action and the other, the willingness to look into the abyss.

The late historian Howard Zinn was never without the optimism of the will. "The Constitution gave no rights to working people; no right to work less than 12 hours a day, no right to a living wage, no right to safe working conditions. Workers had to organize, go on strike, defy the law, the courts, the police, create a great movement which won the eight-hour day and caused such commotion that Congress was forced to pass a minimum wage law, and Social Security and unemployment insurance... Those rights only come alive when citizens organize, protest, demonstrate, strike, boycott, rebel and violate the law in order to uphold justice."

Yet even as the times become more desperate, new ways of thinking and relating are on the rise. Half-abandoned wastelands like Detroit are rebuilding from the

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## My optimistic self was pleasantly surprised that Stewart and Colbert's rally reportedly sparked 1,160 mini-rallies by expat Americans, in 84 countries around the world

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follow the US example, which now has the greatest income disparities since the robber barons' Gilded Age? (According to economist Michael Hudson, two percent of the population now receives an estimated three quarters of the returns to wealth in the form of interest, dividends, rent and capital gains). Hedge fund managers have made out like bandits, while millions of middle class workers have lost their jobs, their homes and their savings. Millions more are waiting their turn. Adult children have moved back home, if they have a home to move back to. Local and state taxes are on the rise. Teachers, police and firefighters have been laid off. Bridges and roads are decaying, pipelines are breaking down, schools are crumbling and public libraries are being shuttered up. (Several weeks ago in rural Tennessee, firefighters let a home burn to the ground because the homeowner hadn't paid a \$75 fee.)

Wall Street's trillion-dollar Ponzi schemes metastasized into the global credit crisis, and in response, governments in North America and Europe have reached into their treasuries to set things right. They

soil up, driven by the optimism of the will. There is a new vision emerging in the world, involving hundred-mile food networks, lending circles, alternate currencies and alternative media. (Check out [transitionculture.org](http://transitionculture.org) for working examples across the world.)

I had a good time at the Seattle Rally to Restore Sanity and I didn't really expect anything more than that. There's still something to be said for the binding force of humour and avoidance of the politics of hate. In Seattle, I was surrounded by thousands of high-spirited people who wanted nothing more than to restore their republic to its original, Jeffersonian ideals.

Unfortunately, that republic of checks and balances, held together by free thinking citizens, is a relic in dusty, high school history books. It's a dream that died with John F. Kennedy. Yet the republic slumbers on, muttering political slogans and lines from late-night television. When enough people wake up and rub their eyes in the harsh light of noonday, perhaps the real restoration of sanity can begin.

[www.geoffolson.com](http://www.geoffolson.com)



# A Canadian thank-you note to Jon Stewart

November 2, 2010

THE HATERS and the snickerers are already taking whacks at the newest piñata in town: Jon Stewart's Rally to Restore Sanity. Actually, I am finding it easier today to ignore them than I usually do, as I myself just recently returned from the East End of the National Mall in Washington, D.C.

On September 16, Jon Stewart looked earnestly through the black box in our living room and invited us (and everyone else on Earth who could find a babysitter) to convene on the Mall and help send a message to the media: "Hey, take it down a notch – for America." My husband Lee and I looked at each other and said, "We gotta find a babysitter!" We booked our flights and on Oct 28 we travelled more than 3,800 km from Victoria BC to Washington DC.

Friends asked us why we were so interested. It's not like we get a vote in the upcoming US election. Frankly, that's why it felt so necessary for us to make the trip.

As a Canadian, you live your whole



life right next door to this big charismatic fellow who might do just about anything and get away with it. You keep your head down and quietly go about your Canadian ways, hoping that he won't notice you too much. Those he tends to pay too much attention to... sometimes don't come out of it so well.

In a way, as we waited for Oct 30 and

our long flight to DC, it almost felt like a reconnaissance trip into enemy territory. Get in. Gather information about the 'sitch.' Get out.

In Canada (probably as a defense mechanism), we tend to feel somewhat smug about our noisy fraternal twin. Sure, he's better looking and gets invites to all the cool parties. But we get free doctor

by Jennifer Andison, Victoria, BC  
photos by Geoff Olson

a part of the crowd on Saturday and as I sat at my computer and cropped it around the flag that they love so much, I looked at them. Their faces are expectant, polite, hopeful, patient. Intelligent. They don't know what the solution is. But they are intensely interested in finding one.

They are old. They are young. They are black and white and every colour in-between. They are strong and tall, and they are in wheelchairs with oxygen tanks. They are students and professionals and artists and athletes and the rich and the poor and the unemployed and everyone else as well. They had one thing in common: they were enacting part of the elusive American Dream on that Mall.

We assembled all over the front lawn of the government's most sacred buildings and we were not herded or corralled. There was no evidence (from where I stood) of billy clubs or tear gas. I wasn't patted down or threatened or obstructed in any way. Certain people on television might do well to consider these facts before they start casually throwing



.....  
**It wasn't a 'fake protest' or a 'faux rally' or any breed of talking-head comedio-pundit variety show. It wasn't about Democrats or Republicans. This was an historic twenty-first century phenomenon, a statement of intention and ultimately, a vehicle for those "People" mentioned in that first bit of your Constitution.**  
.....

and hospital visits. Whenever we need them, with whichever doctor or hospital we choose. We have Wayne Gretzky. We have all the potash.

We like to snicker when Rick Mercer gets Americans to lament over the outrage of the Toronto polar bear hunts. It's so easy for a Canadian to watch an episode of *Fox & Friends* and to make a quick judgment about a country with congressmen and women who seem much more interested in who's marrying whom than the fact that there are still thousands of families living in FEMA trailers in New Orleans. The Americans are all crazy right? Wacko gun nuts. Change the channel. Put the hockey game back on.

But on Saturday, thanks to Jon Stewart and Stephen Colbert, and about a quarter-million wonderful blissfully /normal /people... I learned my lesson. The wackos on the television are categorically NOT representative of the average American human being. I photographed

around big scary words like socialism.

The event that took place on that massive lawn could not have taken place in an actual socialist state like North Korea.

The First Amendment was being peacefully enjoyed in thousands of ways all over the place. In the dozens of different religions sitting respectfully side by side. In the thousands of creative and hate-free signs the people carried. In the, er, slightly-flattened grass of the Mall as we did our calmly cheerful assembling and petitioning. (Do consider donating to [www.nationalmall.org](http://www.nationalmall.org) for reseeding so the landscapers let Stewart and Colbert come back someday.)

It was enjoyed in the concepts of freedom of speech, freedom of press, democracy and grassroots journalism. Heck, Prop 19 even made a token appearance. People recorded this event from thousands and thousands of points of view. These images are flooding the internet every hour now and *continued p.31...*





# Let's infiltrate the CBC

INDEPENDENT MEDIA Steve Anderson

On the brisk morning of October 21, a vanguard of media innovation made its way into CBC/Radio-Canada's Annual Public Meeting (APM) in Vancouver. The plan was unspoken, but each of the wry smiles we exchanged was more than enough to acknowledge our purpose. After all, although insidious, our goal was quite simple: infiltrate the CBC and make it more community based, participatory and awesome.

Not long into the meeting, executives of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation described their network as a "public space." They also noted that Canada is at the centre of a revolution in media, with more opportunity for citizen participation than ever before. "We want what Canadians want," said Hubert Lacroix, CBC's president and CEO, "a vibrant CBC/Radio-Canada that gives voice to a creative nation."



Radio 3 and CBC Digital Programming. We would host him at our next Fresh Media ReMixology event.

At 5 PM on November 8, the festivities began, including live DJs, a Twitter wall that displayed comments from the audience and the Internet, a live web TV feed that permitted any one on the web to watch and comment on the talk and a cash bar and snacks. Would it all prove to be just too awesome for Pratt to handle? It turns out not.

Pratt said things like, "Turn the keys over to the audience and start empowering the audience to help each find what they want... and to give up control." Pratt also talked about Radio 3, noting, "It is an innovation centre for the public broadcaster," adding "We're not a radio station, we're a music discovery service."

He may not have known it at the time, but Pratt was one of us – a Freshie as

**Turns out we have a whole project within the CBC that has put innovation and participation at the forefront of their operation.**

Wait a second, were they on to us? They were speaking our language, but why?

While there was evidence of a shift in thinking at the CBC, it didn't feel tangible enough to satisfy us. We mingled with local CBC personnel after the event. Several of us innocent looking "citizens" encircled a CBC person and repeated our propaganda points while trying to avoid revealing our secret plan to make the CBC more awesome.

"One of the best ways to ensure the CBC's survival and growth is for it to be more community based," one of us said earnestly. "Yes, why not partner with community groups to cover local stories?" another blurted out. "Use web tools to engage people and provide a platform for creativity and dialogue," another chimed in.

I motioned for us to make our way to door – we'd done all we could here.

But our work wasn't finished yet. We needed to find out if there were people on the inside that agree with our media awesomeness ideology. We needed a champion of media innovation.

We set out to find an open minded CBC person we could invite into our Fresh Media community, and evaluate. We chose Steve Pratt, director of CBC

we sometimes call ourselves. Turns out we have a whole project within the CBC that has put innovation and participation at the forefront of their operation.

The best way for the CBC to ensure its survival is to build a community of supporters that truly has a sense of ownership over the organization. As Pratt says, "Empower the people and you'll get a level of trust and ownership you never thought possible."

Lets not sit on the sidelines and wait for the CBC to move in the right direction. If we believe in the potential of public media in a digital era, it's our responsibility to do our part to ensure that potential is realized. It's through engaging with the CBC, particularly the elements most conducive to participation, that will enable it to act as an open platform for media innovation and community collaboration.

Let's infiltrate the CBC with awesomeness.

*Steve Anderson is the national coordinator for OpenMedia.ca He has written for The Tyee, Toronto Star, Epoch Times and Adbusters.*

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# Diverse offerings from Whistler Film Festival

CULTURE

## FILMS WORTH WATCHING

Robert Alstead



Eighteenth century Vienna is the backdrop for Carlos Saura's *I, Don Giovanni*.

IN THE 10th Whistler Film Festival, which ends December 5, it is worth noting that cult Canadian filmmaker Bruce McDonald has three new feature films in the festival: 1) the world premiere of *Hard Core Logo 2*, the sequel to his popular *Hard Core Logo* (1996); 2) the jailhouse blues documentary *Music From the Big House*; 3) the rock 'n' roll drama *Trigger*.

*Trigger* travels to Vancouver for a week at Vancity Theatre (10-16). The film sees McDonald on home turf depicting under-the-skin, rock 'n' roll

lifestyles, with two of Canada's finest actors: Molly Parker and the late Tracy Wright as Vic and Kat, ageing rockers from a '90s rock band called Trigger. (Don McKellar, Callum Keith Rennie and Sarah Polley also feature.) The two reunite for a tribute show, but as the night unfolds, old antagonisms keep flaring up.

As the title suggests, the period setting for Carlos Saura's sumptuous drama *I, Don Giovanni* is 18th century Vienna around the time that Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was penning his

opera *Don Giovanni*. The story focuses on libertine Lorenzo da Ponte, a priest exiled from Venice as a result of his string of affairs. Lorenzo is the inspiration behind Mozart's opera and he also became the lyricist for the project. *I, Don Giovanni* also screens at Vancity Theatre, from December 17.

It's been almost a full decade since the documentary *Promises* managed to find a ray of hope in the entrenched Israeli-Palestinian conflict when it turned the camera on a group of seven local children from either side of the divide. The plight of a single child is the starting point of a new thought provoking Israeli documentary, *Precious Life* (Haim yekarim), which looks at personal responses to the endless violence and instability in the region.

During Israel's 2008-2009 blockade of Gaza, narrator and Israeli television journalist Shlomi Eldar, looking for a story, helps a local surgeon raise \$55,000 for a bone marrow operation for an immune-disorder Palestinian baby, Mohammad. However, what would initially appear to be a story about two sides overcoming prejudices to save a child's life is not so straightforward. Raida, the religiously observant baby's mother, struggles with anti-

Israeli sentiment from her community in Gaza and at one point endorses suicide bombing, creating unforeseen moral dilemmas. The doc is due out this month.

The feel-good factor is there in spades in mainstream drama *Made In Dagenham* (out Dec. 17), a heart-warming feminist tale based on a British labour dispute in 1968. Sally Hawkins plays a feisty factory worker who, at the urgings of her union representative (played by Bob Hoskins), leads 167 machine workers at the Ford Motor Company's plant in the London suburb of Dagenham on a strike for equal pay. The two-year-long campaign resulted in landmark legislation.

Another crowd-pleaser is *The King's Speech* (out Dec. 10), which sees Colin Firth in that buttoned-up, upper crust role that he does so well. King George VI (Firth) struggled desperately with a stammer at a time when more than ever before, with Hitler's rise in Germany, England needed a leader with strong oratorical skills. Successive attempts to conquer his debilitating condition ended in failure until an Australian speech therapist (Geoffrey Rush) helped him to untangle his tongue.

Finally, the European Film Festival runs at Pacific Cinémathèque until December 9, with films from Poland, Slovakia, Lithuania, Finland, Sweden, UK, Romania, Portugal, Hungary and Slovenia screening this month. One to look out for is France's *Of Gods and Men* (3rd, 6.45 PM). The Grand Prix winner at the Cannes Film festival, it dramatizes with great poignancy the true story of a brotherhood of Cistercian monks who, during the Algerian war of the 1990s, chose to peacefully face Islamic extremists rather than quit their monastic duties.

Robert Alstead made the Vancouver documentary *You Never Bike Alone*. [www.youneverbikealone.com](http://www.youneverbikealone.com). He writes at [www.2020Vancouver.com](http://www.2020Vancouver.com)

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...*Humanizing* from p. 21

build in people the capacity and the satisfaction of creating complex social relationships that are part of a truly meaningful personal identity. Religious organizations are another. But unless co-operatives and other organizations within civil society recognize the urgency of social connection clearly, as well as their role in responding to it, the danger is that other, less positive forms of belonging will inevitably arise to fill the void. The tribalism inherent in fascistic or nationalistic movements, for example, feeds on this. The power of a perfected art of identity manipulation, combined with a broad social disaffection and insecurity at this most elemental level of human psychology is a truly frightening prospect, and the signs of its emergence in contemporary political and religious propaganda gives little room for complacency. The extremist populism that is now disfiguring the political culture of the US is one example. There is much at stake and the role of social institutions that can help to repair the dysfunction caused by our consumption-obsessed culture cannot be overstated.

Post scarcity economies also mean that individuals can make the kinds of economic choices which express values that go beyond the satisfaction of basic needs. There is a growing movement among consumers to align their economic choices with their personal values. This is the positive aspect of identity formation as an extension of consumption. But ethical choices about consumption are redeemed by their social dimension. They are directed to outcomes that reflect a social connection to others who, in turn, are affected by that choice. Co-operatives allow consumers, as well as producers, to humanize markets by incorporating values

which increase in relevance as societies solve basic issues of survival. From this standpoint, the nature of co-operatives as socially directed enterprises makes them uniquely suited to the ethical standards that will be increasingly expected of enterprises in the future. The degree to which this is the case may already be judged by the behaviour of capitalist firms today. The entire movement toward corporate social responsibility is a strategic response by corporations to address the growing importance of market ethics in the mind of the consumer. Co-operatives have had a profound influence on corporations in this regard. Their conduct in the marketplace as socially conscious enterprises has become contagious. When corporations like Microsoft encourage their employees to do community work and pay them to do so, or oil companies like BP rebrand themselves as environmental champions, something has shifted. Corporations are attempting to humanize their image, and sometimes, their behaviour. But in the era of ethical consumption, co-ops have a natural advantage, and the more important that ethics and social responsibility become for selling a dysfunctional economic model, or the survival of the planet, the more corporations will be compelled to adopt the appearance, if not the substance, of the co-operative model.

This introduces at least some notion of social accountability into corporate behaviour. But it is not enough. Sooner or later, the gap between appearance and reality that is inherent in the structure of corporations becomes manifest. Rarely has this been more starkly presented than the case of the rebranded BP. For over two months, upwards of 50,000 gallons

of crude oil gushed into the Gulf every day, fouling the shorelines of Louisiana, Alabama, Mississippi and Florida and imperiling not only the Gulf fishery, but an entire way of life. By the end of June, the cleanup cost had surpassed \$2 billion dollars. This was a predictable catastrophe that mirrors at an environmental level the systemic and ideological failures that led inevitably to the 2008 financial collapse on Wall Street. And behind the sunny, leafy, environmentally friendly new logo of BP, the true character of the company now stands naked. It turns out the oil giant, despite rebranding itself as an environmentally conscious corporation, had devoted a mere .03 of one percent of its profits to ensuring the safety of its operations. No amount of spin or marketing manipulation will ever address the utter disconnect between social values and social controls over corporate behaviour on the one hand and the immoral thirst for profits at any cost on the other. For this to happen, the business model personified by BP has to be reconstructed along democratic principles if it is ever to be truly accountable to anyone beyond its shareholders. Sooner or later, the appearance of corporate social responsibility has to give way to substance.

*Adapted from Humanizing the Economy: Co-operatives in the Age of Capital by John Restakis, New Society Publishers, 2010. John Restakis is the executive director of the BC Co-operative Association and a pioneering researcher in the area of international economies. [www.bcca.coop](http://www.bcca.coop)*

#### Notes

An article in the New York Times Business Section provided a most

revealing, and unintended, reference to the underlying logic that drives the health system in the US. In describing the rebound of the market due to the optimistic reports of recovery by analysts, it was reported that health care shares surged after Congress delayed a new tax on the industry as part of the proposed health reform. Without a trace of irony, one portfolio manager at 1st Source Investment Advisors in South Bend Indiana was quoted as saying, "Every day that the legislation gets watered down and they pull more teeth, the health stocks rally because there is going to be less damage to their profits." "Markets Rebound on Assist by Optimistic Analysts," New York Times, Tuesday, Dec. 22, 2009.

<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile, recent efforts by Congress to approve measures giving bankruptcy judges the power to write down the principal on homeowners' mortgages were killed by the banking lobby. "Foreclosures mark pace of enduring U.S. housing crisis." Reuters October 8, 2009

<sup>3</sup> Peter S. Goodman, "On Your Left, Another Relic of the Bust," *New York Times*, January 3, 2010. Visit [www.foreclosuresRUs.com](http://www.foreclosuresRUs.com) for details.

<sup>4</sup> Some may object that I am equating spiritual values with the kind of religiosity I just finished criticizing. I intend no such thing. I am merely pointing out that the spiritual dimension, however defined, is an essential human attribute – whether one is a believer in any particular form of spiritual practice or not. To cultivate a form of society that is incapable of recognizing it, much less experiencing it, is the most profound folly as is shown in every instance where it has been attempted.

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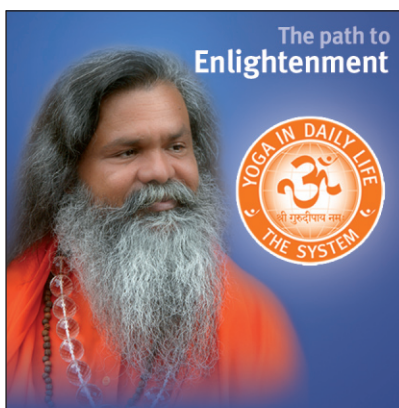
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**G**ORDON CAMPBELL'S supposedly 'neutral' chief electoral officer rejected the wording for the Recall Petition Application for exceeding the 200-word maximum. Here is the text submitted by Michael Roy Hayes of Victoria in the document entitled "Statement for Recall Petition Application."

"We are recalling Oak Bay-Gordon Head MLA Ida Chong because she supported the deceptive introduction of the HST. During the 2009 election, the premier and the finance minister stated that the HST was NOT on their agenda. BC voters re-elected them on May 12, 2009. Just 72 days later, the BC Liberal government, without any public consultation, debate or enabling Legislation, implemented the HST through an "Order in Council" making it law on July 1, 2010. The successful Fight-HST Initiative petition campaign to repeal the HST sent a clear message to our MLA, without effect.

Ms. Chong now supports a costly HST referendum estimated at over \$35 million to take place more than a year after the anti-HST petition, creating economic uncertainty that is harming businesses and consumers. She has defended the tax even though her campaign never included it. She refuses to listen to the majority of her constituents who do not want the HST, siding with her party over the people who elected her. The voters of Oak Bay-Gordon Head deserve honesty and accountability from our elected representative. A successful Recall will send Ida Chong a message that she must represent the people who elected her."

The following is an excerpt from a document issued by the office of Elections BC's CEO Craig James citing the reasons for the disqualification of the Application for Recall Petition: "Elections BC will count the number of words in the statement as if the written statement was being

read aloud. Further, abbreviations, numerals, acronyms and initialisms will be read as if they were written in full...

"Subject to the standard on hyphenated terms... numerals are to be spelled out in words before calculating the number of words e.g. "85" is two words (eighty-five), "one hundred" is two words, "twenty-three" is two words, "2010" is three words (two thousand ten)."

Fight HST co-leader Bill Vander Zalm is calling for the resignation of Elections BC Acting Chief Electoral Officer Craig James in the wake of his decision to reject the application for Recall by Oak Bay-Gordon Head proponent Michael Roy Hayes on the basis that the Recall statement attached to the petition application is "too long."

According to Vander Zalm, "This simply continues the same pattern of obstruction that has characterized Elections BC since Craig James was appointed by Premier Gordon Campbell to take over. If there were restrictions on acronyms, that information should have been given to the applicants at the time they were handed their application."

Colin Nielsen, the Lead Organizer for the Oak Bay-Gordon Head Recall says he has also been told that since the application was rejected, over 150 canvasser applications must also be re-done and re-signed.

"This is a deliberate attempt to blow us out of the water before the Christmas break. All Elections BC had to do was call us up and let us know there was a 'technical glitch' and we could have easily fixed it. But James is doing everything he can to try to thwart the democratic process rather than facilitate it. It's like he's making up the rules as he goes along," Nielsen said.

Regardless of the government's stalling tactics, the MLA Recall Petition will continue, and after this latest insult, with more determination.

**For information, go to [www.fightHST.com](http://www.fightHST.com) If you would like to support the recall initiative, your donations are most welcome. Please make cheques payable to: FightHST and mail to 370 East Broadway, P. O. Box 95023, Vancouver, BC, V5T 4T8.**

**DEC 9**

**Banyen's 40th Anniversary:** Ridge Theatre, Arbutus/16th, 7PM. Includes skype-in with Ram Dass and the film Saint Misbehavin' ... The Wavy Gravy movie. Rameshwar Das, co-author with Ram Dass of Be Love Now shares stories from the new book. Tickets \$20 through Banyen, 604-737-8858, at the Ridge Box Office or online at [www.festivalcinemas.ca](http://www.festivalcinemas.ca)

**DEC 9**

**"Happy New Age!" Free Aquarian Christmas Party** with art show, multi-media, refreshments. Artists in attendance. Drop-in, 7-9 pm, Roundhouse Community Centre (Pacific @ Davie). 604.983.0926.

**DEC 10**

**Introduction to Foot Reflexology** commences Certificate Weekend Training Course. Introduction 7:30PM, \$10; Course \$350. Pacific Institute of Reflexology (604) 875-8818 [www.pacificreflexology.com](http://www.pacificreflexology.com)

**DEC 18**

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**DEC 21**

**Meditation for Planetary Peace on the Full Moon,** Tuesday, December 21st, at 7:30PM. 2950 Laurel St, Vancouver. [www.pranichealing.ca/vancouver.htm](http://www.pranichealing.ca/vancouver.htm)

**DEC 25 & 26**

**A Happy REIKI Xmas:** 10-3PM, Level 1, Cert. Course. \$300. PET & OWNER REIKI Treatments by appt. Master Michael Alaska-Japanese Usui meth. Info/map: [www.psychicstudio.ca](http://www.psychicstudio.ca)

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### JAN 27

**"Down on the Farm"** – FarmFolk/CityFolk photographer Brian Harris talk & multimedia show highlighting the most compelling aspects of his past 4 years photographing and meeting with our local sustainable farmers. 7-9pm, Ferry Building Gallery, 1414 Argyle Avenue, West Vancouver. \$13. Call to pre-register: 604-925-7270. Course# 769068. Limited seating. Harris/FFCFphotography Preview: [www.ffcprojects.ca/Heroes/Heroes.html](http://www.ffcprojects.ca/Heroes/Heroes.html) [www.brianharrisphotography.net](http://www.brianharrisphotography.net)

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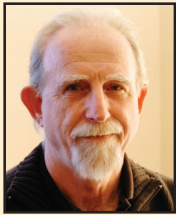
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# Star Wise

December 2010

Mac McLaughlin

Mac McLaughlin has been a practising professional astrologer for more than 4 decades. His popular *Straight Stars* column ran in Canada's largest weekly magazine, the *Georgia Straight*, for 11 years. Email [mac@macsstars.com](mailto:mac@macsstars.com) or call 604-731-1109.

**L**AST MONTH, Adrien Dilon contributed her last *On Track* Zodiac column to *Common Ground*. We would like to thank her for her contributions over the years and wish her much happiness and fulfillment in her future ventures. Stepping in for Adrien, we are pleased to welcome Mac McLaughlin in the role of astrologer extraordinaire. Mac was born in New England in 1946 and came to Canada in the early seventies. From a very early age, he expressed an interest in spiritual matters. In his early twenties, he realized he had a deep intrinsic connection to the stars.

Around the time his study of astrology began, he often intuitively knew people's birth signs and their correct birth dates. Mac has studied eastern mysticism and spiritual philosophy throughout his adult life, resulting in a deep knowledge of karma and reincarnation. Mysticism and palmistry, along with Western and Eastern astrology, are a few of the tools he uses in his consultations. According to the mystics, our fate and destiny are written on our hands and in the stars.

A strong intuitive and psychic ability is also very apparent

when meeting Mac. He says, "Psychic ability is not something I can count on all the time, but definitely it's a helpful tool when trying to understand and unlock the mysteries that make up who we really are. It is a great pleasure and great honour to write for *Common Ground* and hopefully we can deliver some grounded and solid astrology that suits the common needs of everyday people. The stars incline and they compel as well and we may want to digest the old saying, "A wise man rules his stars and a fool follows them."



## ARIES (Mar 21 – Apr 19)

Put the past away as the future is fast approaching. No time to ponder, no time to wonder. Just do it. A whirlwind of fortunate opportunities, chock full of surprises awaits thee. Big changes are in the wind. 2011 may prove to be a most dynamic year. Make the best of it.



## TAURUS (Apr 20 – May 21)

Relationships heat up over the holidays and friendships old and new take on a deeper significance. It is time to share and open up to what the universe has to offer. It is also time to work out the kinks healthwise, as persistent concerns could become chronic if not nipped in the bud.



## GEMINI (May 22 – Jun 20)

Revelations and realizations come flooding in on December 20 and 21. Changes in the workplace may come suddenly and prove to be beneficial in the future. 2012 is your year, while 2011 represents a time of preparation, perspiration and dedication. They will pay dividends in the long term.



## CANCER (Jun 21 – Jul 22)

The Full Moon on December 21 will bring powerful experiences. Life becomes heightened and intense. Clashes could occur. Take your time and let the smoke clear before you make any important decisions. 2011 will prove to be a most dynamic year in which great changes take place, personally and professionally.



## LEO (Jul 23 – Aug 22)

Health and work are the two main concerns that need your attention as 2010 comes to a close. Travel, exploration and spiritual regeneration will do you a world of good. In the meantime, your good deeds and generous capacity to help others will increase. You're on the move and in the groove.



## VIRGO (Aug 23 – Sep 22)

The Moon enters Virgo close to sunrise on Christmas morning, placing you in your lunar high of the month. Good times are indicated. 2011 brings relationships and family considerations strongly to the fore. The second half of the year holds great potential and promise as the stars cast good energy your way.



## LIBRA (Sep 23 – Oct 22)

Saturn visits Libra until early October 2012. Make the best use of his guidance and wisdom. He will teach you the proper ways of balancing and harmonizing your life. Just like any caring parent, he will strive to protect you and keep you healthy. 2011 is a power packed year in which myriad changes come your way.



## SCORPIO (Oct 23 – Nov 21)

Venus visits Scorpio throughout December bringing good times, abundance and love. Action and attraction take place, as well as warmth and affection with family. Creativity is high and you may have all kinds of ideas to explore. New relationship and partnership energies develop in the last half of 2011.



## SAGITTARIUS (Nov 22 - Dec 21)

The Full Moon on December 21 brings excitement along with a few revelations as to which way to go, regarding situations that were previously muddled. Moves or renovations are in the plans and the renovation may be an internal one. It's all good. Record your dreams as powerful symbolism may be coming through them.



## CAPRICORN (Dec 22 - Jan 19)

You are in the midst of a transformative process that will bring you through a rebirth and Lord Saturn moves through the sign of the scales bringing fairness and justice. Many things may be taken away and other things will come your way. 2011 is a year that will long be remembered by the Capricorns.



## AQUARIUS (Jan 20 – Feb 19)

This is a bit weird, but here we go. 2011 is a blank canvas and you are invited to create your own masterpiece. The planets are not focused on your sign. They are out and about ministering to the other signs. You have a free pass to create what you want, in the way that you want. Spiritual revelations open your heart.



## PISCES (Feb 20 – Mar 20)

A most opportune time is upon you. The great conjunction of Jupiter and Uranus in Pisces will lift you to new dimensions of awareness. You are limitless, you are stardust and you are golden. Surrender and ride the wave. Fear not; be brave and receive gratefully whatever gifts the universe offers up.

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...*Drug Bust* from p. 7

adult. They do not develop classical mania. That's why you have to use the term 'bipolar spectrum disorder' in order to justify treating them as a 'bipolar,'" he says. "And then they get the drugs." Last year in Canada, nearly 700,000 prescriptions for such antipsychotics were dispensed for kids under 13.

So back to the central question that launched me on this tirade: Why is a drug like Seroquel – US sales in 2009 were almost \$5 billion – the fifth biggest revenue-generating drug in the US? Is it because experts are expanding the definitions of bipolar, using screening tools that are accurate only about a third of the time or working as paid

spokespeople for the drug companies? Is it because psychiatrists are more than willing to prescribe drugs they know to be dangerous to people for whom those drugs have not been tested?

It is all of those things as well as the phenomenon we've seen dozens of times before: we've allowed marketing to masquerade as science. Who wouldn't feel irritable and ready to fly off the handle? Maybe it's about making all of us a bit more crazy and ready to swallow the next pill being offered.

*Alan Cassels is a pharmaceutical policy researcher at the University of Victoria.*



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